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BY FRED BARNES

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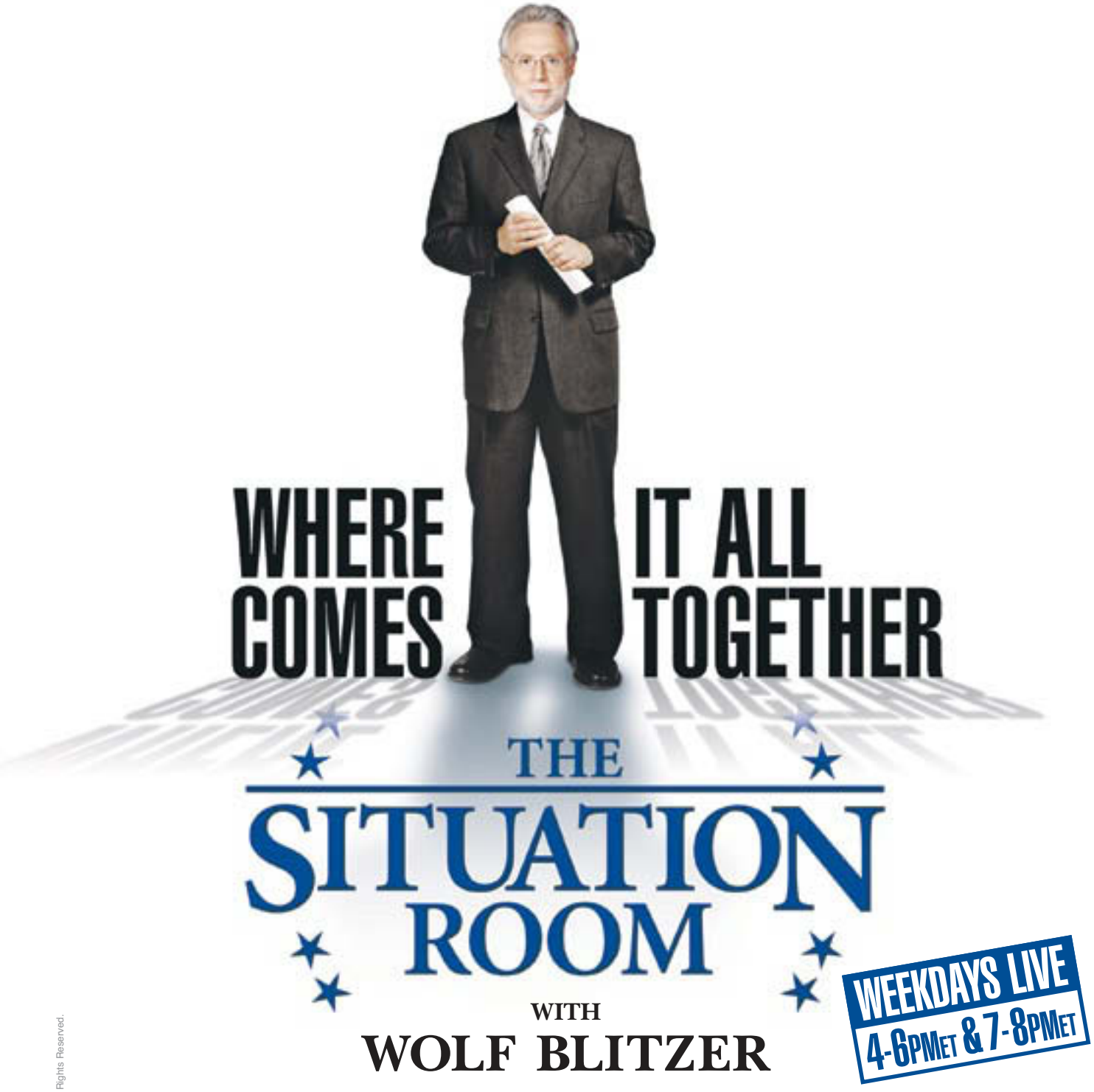

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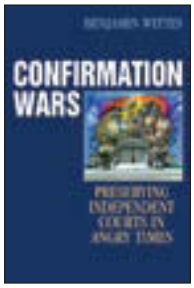

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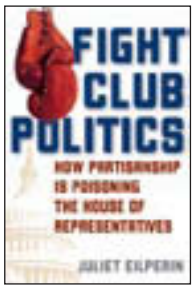

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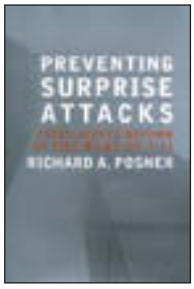

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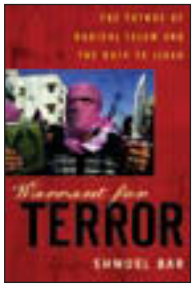

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Contents

October 9, 2006 • Volume 12, Number 4

2 Scrapbook .... *Deutsche Oper, latest* Kelo *outrage, more.*

4 Casual ..... *Andrew Ferguson,* PREPARER.

7 Editorial ..... *Who's Really in Denial?*

Articles

8 The Buck Starts Here *George W. Bush was never a fiscal conservative.* ..... BY ROSS DOUTHAT & REIHAN SALAM

12 A Japan That Can Say Yes *The nationalism of Prime Minister Abe.* ..... BY DAN BLUMENTHAL & GARY SCHMITT

13 Louis Farrakhan's First Congressman *Why is the press so incurious about Keith Ellison?* ..... BY SCOTT W. JOHNSON

16 The Quiet Vietnamese *Journalist and spy Pham Xuan An led a life of ambiguity.* ..... BY DAVID DEVOSS

17 'The Expansion Process Has Begun' *Russia's imperial ambitions are alive and well.* ..... BY REUBEN F. JOHNSON

Cover: USN & WR / Polaris / Archambault

Features

19 Criminalizing Politics
The persecution of Karl Rove, Ken Tomlinson, and Scott Bloch. ..... BY FRED BARNES

23 Haiti in Extremis
The poorest country in the West has bigger problems than poverty. ..... BY NICHOLAS EBERSTADT

Books & Arts

31 A Touch of the Poet *The random wisdom of Robert Frost.* ..... BY WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

33 Famously Sick *Disease in the news, and the people who suffer.* ..... BY RONALD W. DWORKIN

35 Mary's Story *Or, the Good Woman of Long Island.* ..... BY DAVID SKINNER

36 On Tripoli's Shores *Two hundred years ago, the terrorists were pirates.* ..... BY JOSHUA SPIVAK

38 The Appiahn Way *How to Do the Right Thing in the 21st century.* ..... BY JAMES D. SEATON

40 Bulldozing Islam *Historic destruction, Wahhabi style.* ..... BY IRFAN AL-ALAWI AND STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

42 Cops and Robbers *Good guys, bad guys, and mixtures of both.* ..... BY JOHN PODHORETZ

44 Parody ..... 02138 *(It's the name of a magazine.)*

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Show Must Go On?

By the end of last week, it was still uncertain if the Deutsche Oper in Berlin would reschedule performances of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Idomeneo*. The opera was originally canceled for fear of rioting—but not because of anything Mozart himself had written. In this latest production, director Hans Neuenfels features a scene including the decapitated heads of Muhammad, Jesus, Buddha, and Poseidon—slightly ridiculous since the opera is set in ancient Crete.

As Roger Kimball explained in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Mr. Neuenfels's version is Modern German—i.e., gratuitously offensive. It is more Neuenfels than Mozart. Instead of appearing as the harbinger of peace, Idomeneo ends the opera parading the severed heads. . . . How do you spell 'anachronistic balderdash'?" Kimball goes on, "Mr. Neuenfels is one of those directors more interested in nurturing his own pathologies than in offering a faithful presentation of the geniuses with whose work he has been entrusted."

The Scrapbook could not agree more. And if Mozart fans had wanted to riot, The Scrapbook would have suspended its usual law and order stance and been tempted to join them in storming the ramparts. But that was not the problem. Fearing potential reprisals from the Muslim community, and after local security officials warned of an "incalculable security risk," opera house director Kirsten Harms announced a change in the fall lineup, replacing *Idomeneo* with *The Marriage of Figaro* and *La Traviata*. (We would have really gotten a kick if they had replaced it with *The Abduction from the Seraglio*.)

Chancellor Angela Merkel and other members of the Bundestag have condemned the preemptive capitulation to intimidation as craven. At a press conference in Washington last Tuesday, Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble was resolutely anti-capitulation, saying "we will not accept it." According to a *Frankfurter Allgemeine* online poll, a solid majority of Germans also consider the move to be an act of cowardice. And they're right.

But what Frau Harms needs to ponder is that while she may have escaped the wrath of radical Muslims, this sensitivity business could quickly get out of hand—as many famous operas are anti-clerical, anti-Muslim, and even anti-French. In the aforementioned *La Traviata*, for instance, Violetta, a Parisian courtesan, is unable to marry the man she loves because his father is too concerned with upholding his family's reputation. She then returns to her "protector" and, after a brief reunion with her true love, dies of tuberculosis.

Are the French going to take this lying down, as it were, and accept being portrayed as hookers, snobs, and pimps? The Scrapbook fears it is only a matter of time before the French issue a complaint—if not a fatwa—and the Deutsche Oper cancels Verdi. ♦

Another Eminent Domain Outrage

Once upon a time, local governments could take your property only when they needed it for some public use. Then (thanks to the Supreme Court's *Kelo* decision) they were allowed to take your property because some other private party (i.e., a developer) promised to generate more tax revenues with it. Can they now take it just because they don't like the look of it? That's what the Washington state supreme court must decide.

Seven sisters in Burien, Washington—the Strobel sisters—own a small parcel that they lease to a successful local diner, Meal Makers. The city of Burien is undertaking a redevelopment nearby with upscale condominiums, shops, restaurants, and office space in what they call their Town Square (you can see the plans at *www.burientownsquare.com*). The plan doesn't require the use of the land on which the diner sits, but the diner doesn't quite fit the city fathers' vision of what "upscale" should look like.

So the City of Burien ginned up a plan to put a road through the Strobel sisters' property, allowing it to condemn the diner. The Institute for Justice, which is representing the Strobels, reports that the city manager told his planning staff to "make damn sure" that the new road went through the diner. When the staff drew up a plan that only sideswiped the property, he sent them back to the drawing board.

The Strobels took the city to court, where the judge found that the planned road "could have been easily accomplished without affecting" the Strobels. He nonetheless found for the city. An appeals court upheld his ruling. The Strobels now hope for relief from the state supreme court. ♦

CBS 'News': the Couric Era

CBS News anchor Katie Couric interviews Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, September 24, 2006:

Couric: When she defends her posi-

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tion, this former Stanford professor can at times sound like she's lecturing a class. . . . Is it really priority number one, in terms of philosophically and pragmatically, for the United States to be spreading democracy around the world?

RICE: Well, first of all, the United States is not spreading democracy. The United States is standing with those who want a democratic future. . . . What's wrong with assistance so that people can have their full and complete right to the very liberties and freedoms that we enjoy?

COURIC: To quote my daughter, 'Who made us the boss of them?'

Well—seems to us that when the interviewer at times sounds like she's channeling a 10-year-old, the interviewee can be forgiven for sounding like she's lecturing a class. ♦

Jewish Ancestors in the Closet

A fascinating historical footnote to the story of Sen. George Allen's Jewish forebears appeared last week in *Washington Jewish Week*. Rafael Medoff reports on the discovery by *Time* magazine in 1939 that Secretary of State Cordell Hull's "entry in *Who's Who* wrongly stated that his wife's last name was Whitney, which was her married name from her first marriage." Hull's wife, Frances Witz, was the daughter of a Jewish immigrant from Austria—a fact he feared would doom his presidential hopes. Hull's boss, FDR, apparently agreed.

Writes Medoff: "The president told Sen. Burton Wheeler (D-Mont.) in August 1939 . . . [that] Mrs. Hull's Jewishness 'would be raised' by [Hull's] opponents. FDR added: 'Mrs. Hull is about one quarter Jewish. You and I, Burt, are old English and Dutch stock. . . . We know there is no Jewish blood in our veins, but a lot of these people do not know whether there is Jewish blood in their veins or not.'"

The political speculation was mooted, of course, by Roosevelt's decision to run for a third term. Hull served as secretary of state until 1944, and received a Nobel Peace Prize the following year. ♦

Annals of Prisoner Abuse

"She was abused by guards who kept lights on in her cell until she would sign an autograph."

—from the obituary of Iva Ikuko Toguri D'Aquino, aka "Tokyo Rose," *Washington Post*, September 28

No Comment

"Maybe I am so sick of self-importance because I am so given to it . . . "

—Leon Wieseltier, *New Republic*, October 9, 2006

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Casual

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Andrew Ferguson

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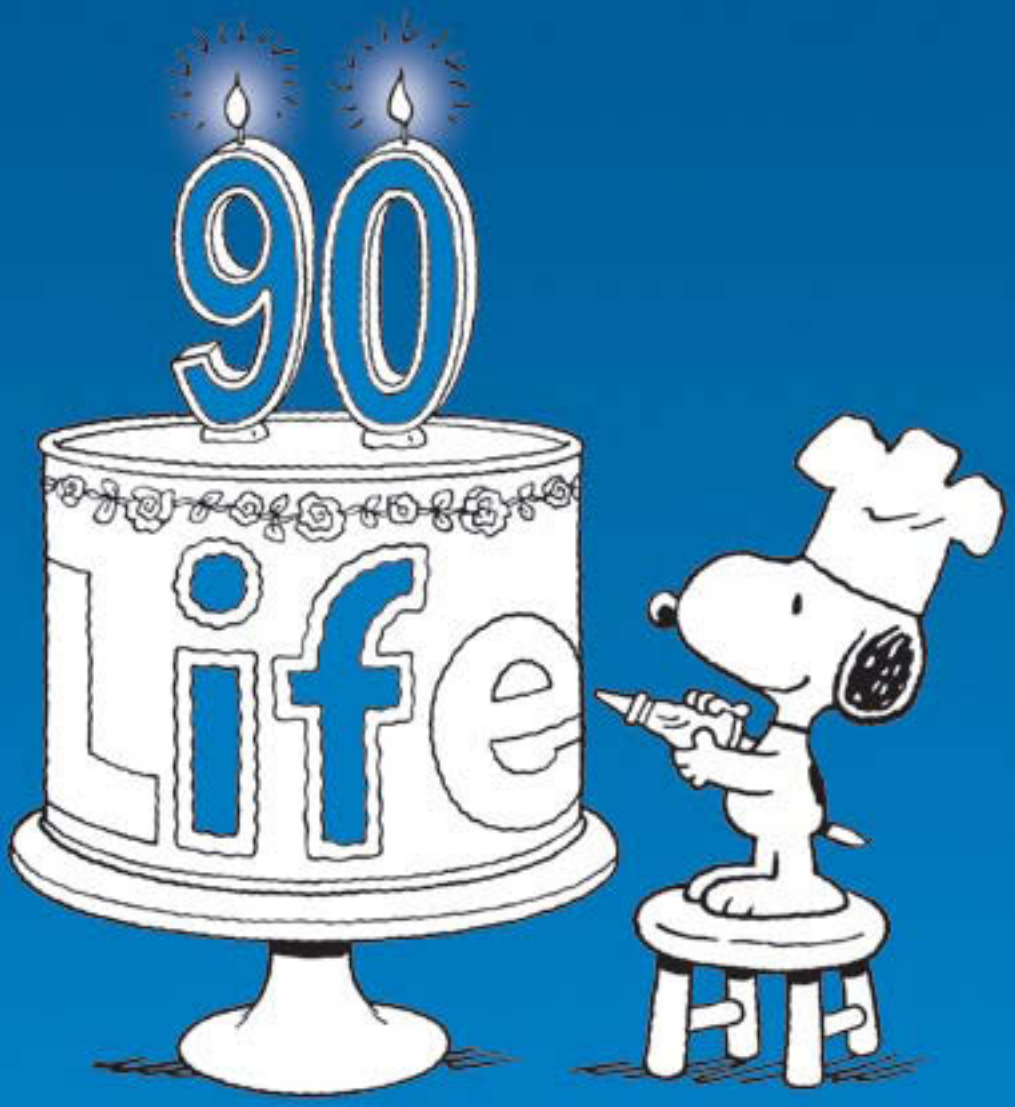

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the weekly Standard

Who's Really in Denial?

"Americans face the choice between two parties with two different attitudes on this war on terror."
—*George W. Bush, September 28, 2006*

President Bush is right. It would be nice if he weren't. The country would be better off if there were bipartisan agreement on what is at stake in the struggle against jihadist Islam. But despite areas of consensus, there is still a fundamental difference between the parties. Bush and the Republicans know we are in a serious war. It's not the Bush administration that is in a "State of Denial" (as the new Bob Woodward book has it). It's the Democrats.

Consider developments over the last week. Democrats hyped last Sunday's news stories breathlessly reporting on one judgment from April's National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)—that the war in Iraq has created more terrorists. More than would otherwise have been created if Saddam were still in power? Who knows? The NIE seems not even to have contemplated how many terrorists might have been created by our backing down, by Saddam's remaining in power to sponsor and inspire terror. (To read the sections of the NIE subsequently released is to despair about the quality of our intelligence agencies. But that's another story.) In any case, the NIE also made the obvious points that, going forward, "perceived jihadist success [in Iraq] would inspire more fighters to continue the struggle elsewhere," while jihadist failure in Iraq would inspire "fewer fighters . . . to carry on the fight."

What is the Democratic response to these latter judgments? Silence. The left wing of the party continues to insist on withdrawal now. The center of the party wants withdrawal on a vaguer timetable.

Bush, on other hand, understands that the only acceptable exit strategy is victory. (If, as Woodward reports, he's been bolstered in that view by Henry Kissinger, then good for Henry. Invite him to the Oval Office more often!) To that end, Bush should do more. He should send substantially more troops and insist on a change of strategy to allow a real counterinsurgency and prevent civil war. But at least he's staying and fighting. And the great majority of Republicans are standing with him. The Democrats, as Bush has put it, "offer nothing but criticism and obstruction, and endless second-guessing. The party of FDR and the party of Harry Truman has become the party of cut-and-run."

So there really is a profound difference between the parties, as Democrats are happy to acknowledge, since they think Iraq is a winning issue for them. The Democratic talking point is this: We're against Bush on Iraq, but we are as resolute as Bush in the real war on terror (understood by them to exclude Iraq). Except that they're not.

That's why last week's votes in Congress on the detainees legislation were so significant. The legislation had nothing to do with Iraq. It was a "pure" war-on-terror vote. And the parties split. Three-quarters of the Democrats in the House and Senate stood with the *New York Times* and the American Civil Liberties Union for more rights for al Qaeda detainees, and against legislation supported by the Bush administration (as well as by John McCain and Joe Lieberman). Some Democrats in competitive races—such as Rep. Harold Ford, running for the Senate in Tennessee—supported the legislation. But it remains the case that a vote for Democrats is a vote for congressional leaders committed to kinder and gentler treatment of terrorists.

No wonder voters think the country will be safer from terrorism if the GOP retains control of Congress. And no wonder focus groups—according to the Democratic polling firm of Greenberg Quinlan Rosner—show that "attacks on Democrats for opposing any effort to stop terrorists . . . were highly effective." The Democratic pollsters recommended countering the attacks forcefully. But how? There are votes, in black and white in the *Congressional Record*, ready to be used in campaign ads.

The most important front in the confrontation with terror-sponsoring, WMD-seeking Islamic jihadism in the next two years may well be Iran. Republicans are viewed by a 12-point margin as the party that would be more likely to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. We have been critical of the Bush administration's lassitude in attending to this task. But with sand in the diplomatic hourglass running out, voters can fairly be asked: Would Bush have more help in denying Ahmadinejad nuclear weapons from a Congress controlled by Republicans or by Democrats (whose main suggestion has been to cozy up to Iran without insisting that it verifiably suspend its nuclear program)?

Off-year elections—especially when one party controls the presidency and Congress—are usually dominated by the expression of grievances stemming from that party's performance. The Bush administration and the congressional leadership have given cause for grievance. But the choice is so stark this November that grievances should be put aside—if Republicans have the nerve to continue to clarify the choice over the next month. Last week was a good start.

—*William Kristol*

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The Buck Starts Here

George W. Bush was never a fiscal conservative.

BY ROSS DOUTHAT & REIHAN SALAM

When the *Washington Monthly* recently asked seven conservatives to explain why they were rooting for GOP defeat this November, some of them complained about the Iraq war, some about the Bush administration's expansive view of executive power, some about the GOP's opposition to stem-cell research. But nearly all of them agreed on at least one point: If you were to boil down the domestic policy failings of the Bush years to just three words, those words might be *spending*, *spending*, and *spending*.

Pining for divided government, Joe Scarborough bemoaned the Republican-led "spending orgy," while Christopher Buckley lamented "six years of record deficits and profligate expansion of entitlement programs." The Cato Institute's William Niskanen accused Bush of being the "profligate" heir of Lyndon Johnson and Harry Truman's "fiscal benders." Bruce Bartlett, the author of *Impostor: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy*, suggested that a Republican defeat would put an end to "out-of-control government spending."

This assessment of the Bush era is shared by supply-siders and Christian conservatives; paleocons and libertarians; Phyllis Schlafly and John McCain; Dick Armey and George Will. Bush's fiscal apostasy is perhaps the only evil that Pat Buchanan and Andrew Sullivan have joined hands—rhetorically, at least—to condemn. The next Republican president, the emerging conservative consensus insists, needs to relearn the tenets of the right-wing catechism and renounce the crypto-liberal heresies of the last six years. Only then will the conservative movement return to the broad sunlit uplands it reached, fleetingly, under the leadership of Ronald Reagan and Newt Gingrich.

This is an appealing fantasy, in which ideological purity leads to political success, and all of Bush's domestic-policy innovations can be thrown out with the bathwater of his failures. Its version of recent history displays the neat symmetry of a morality play: Just as the Reaganite golden age was followed by Bush 41's betrayal, the story goes, so the 1994 renaissance has been undone by another Bush's abandonment of right-wing principle.

Unfortunately, believing this narrative requires a willful amnesia about the difficulties that the Republicans faced in the late 1990s, when the party eagerly turned to George W. Bush to save them from a series of setbacks and defeats. There have been many surprises associated with the Bush presidency, but his willingness to deviate from conservative orthodoxy on the role of government isn't one of them.

Consider where the GOP stood in the run-up to the 1998 midterm elections. The party was powerful but reeling. In a sense, there had never been a better time to be a conservative in America. The GOP had held Congress since 1994, when they captured both houses for the first time since 1954; a Democratic president had rung down the curtain on the era of big government; a right-of-center consensus held sway on everything from welfare and balanced budgets to free trade and out-of-wedlock births.

Yet these victories masked a developing crisis. Gingrich's push for entitlement reform had run aground, like Reagan's before it, on Democratic demagoguery and the public's unwillingness to curb spending. The conservative agenda seemed increasingly to be all stick and no carrot, and the party's leadership, from Gingrich to Dick Armey, Phil Gramm, Tom DeLay, and all the rest, played poorly on the national stage. Worse, the Republicans' congressional majority was already eroding. The GOP lost all the battleground states in the Dole-Clinton presidential race and shed congressional seats in the Rust Belt and Pacific Northwest.

Ross Douthat, an associate editor at the Atlantic Monthly, *and Reihan Salam, a writer in Washington, are at work on a book on the future of the GOP.*

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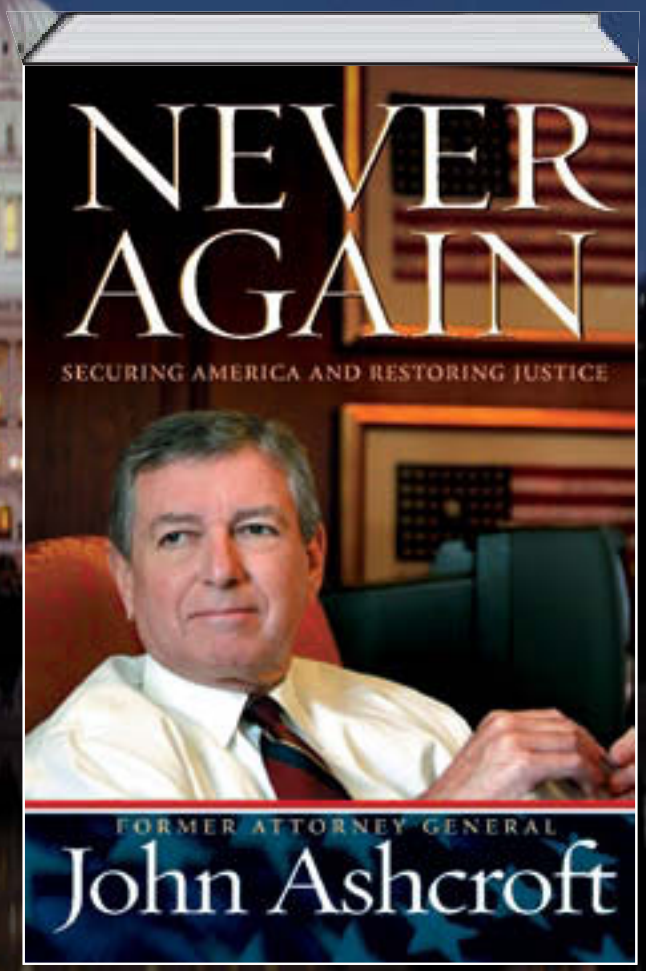

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Then came the '98 midterms, when Gingrich—outflanked by Clinton for the final time—assured his colleagues that they need only remind voters of the Lewinsky scandal, and that an actual policy agenda could wait. By that winter, Gingrich was in exile, the GOP majority was smaller still, and the Republican Revolution was over.

As the 2000 election approached, the GOP turned to George W. Bush, who seemed to embody all the qualities the national party so sorely needed. He was a successful governor with a reformist track record of the kind that had made Republican governors and mayors—Tommy Thompson and John Engler, Rudy Giuliani and Stephen Goldsmith—the pride of the party. He had a record of applying right-wing ideas to traditionally liberal issues like education. And not only could he speak the language of the religious right; he also seemed capable of translating this language into an ecumenical rhetoric of moral renewal that would appeal to the religious middle.

But what Bush wasn't—what he never was, in fact—was an orthodox small-government conservative.

In September 1999, amid a heated debate over the earned-income tax credit, Bush spoke out against the congressional GOP's efforts to defer paying the income reimbursement. "I don't think they ought to balance their budget on the backs of the poor," he argued, adding, "I think we ought to make the tax code such that it's easier for people to move from near poverty to the middle class." A few weeks later, in a speech in New York City, he went further: "Too often," Bush argued, "my party has confused the need for limited government with a disdain for government itself. . . . There are human problems that persist in the shadow of affluence."

This earned Bush a great deal of criticism. Gary Bauer, then running for president, called the "backs of the poor" statement "a classic Ted Kennedy, Barney Frank, Democratic National Committee line." Rush Limbaugh suggested that Bush had left D.C. Republicans "dying on the congressional battlefield." Paul Weyrich described Bush, with obvious venom, as a "moderate politician."

But Bush's message resonated with the public in a way that his critics' arguments didn't. For thirty years, the Democrats have struggled to move beyond the self-marginalizing tendencies of their base; in the late 1990s, the Republicans often seemed in danger of falling into the same trap, becoming the party of prudery, don't-tread-on-me nationalism, and an angry antigovernment message that some thought partook more of Ruby Ridge than Reagan. In leading the GOP out of this snare, Bush returned to the animating insight of the post-Goldwater Republican party: The right can only succeed if it champions a politics of solidarity as well as a politics of liberty.

In September 1999, amid a heated debate over the earned-income tax credit, Bush spoke out against the congressional GOP.

The GOP's path to power took shape when Richard Nixon associated conservatives with the "silent majority" of Americans, bound together not only by a desire for less government, but also by class, culture, family, and faith. Reagan expanded the Nixon majority, not by promising to cut government spending to the bone, but by pledging to make it work for the common good again, rather than for the interest groups and bureaucrats of the Great Society. "It is not my intention to do away with government," Reagan announced in a passage from his First Inaugural that many conservatives seem to have forgotten. "It is, rather, to make it work. . . . Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it."

This was the same promise, reinvented for a new century, that won Bush the presidency in 2000. His message aimed to consolidate working-class support for the GOP, through initiatives aimed at building wealth and an emphasis on reforming education, the issue at the core of blue-collar struggles in a globalized world. At the same time, on size-of-government questions, as Jonathan Rauch argued in 2003, Bush attempted an end-run around the roadblocks that had stopped Gingrich and Reagan's government-cutting crusades in their tracks. Rather than target the "supply-side" of government, or the amount of government spending, Bush's focus was on the "demand-side," or the need for government services. Personal accounts carved out of Social Security would build wealth and reduce reliance on government checks. Dividend tax cuts would reward a growing "investor class" while helping to build a self-sufficient "ownership society" in which the goods of American life were widely dispersed. Marriage promotion would foster stable families and diminish demand for welfare services.

All these ideas, of course, would mean more government spending (or larger deficits) in the short term. But their appeal was crucial to Bush's political success, and the expansion of the GOP majority that followed. Any post-Bush reckoning needs to begin with this reality—and with the acknowledgment that the president's spending heterodoxies saved the GOP from slipping back into minority status.

Bush's conservative critics often admit that his deviations from the small-government line bought him a temporary majority. But they insist he has sowed conservative disaffection that will leave the party worse off than when he found it. "It is largely the defection of conservatives that is driving the president's

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poll numbers to new lows," Richard Viguerie argued recently. The "opportunism" of compassionate conservatism, Andrew Busch suggested in a recent issue of the *Claremont Review of Books*, "will bring its own punishment. Indeed, it is already doing so."

No doubt there is conservative disaffection today. But it failed to manifest itself during Bush's first five years in office, when he was no less of a spender than he is now. If conservative voters have turned against their president, it's because of his perceived incompetence—over Iraq and Katrina—and his support for immigration reform, not No Child Left Behind or the prescription drug entitlement. Indeed, if there's any lesson to take from Bush's sky-high popularity among conservatives for most of his presidency, it's that the movement's rank and file cares far less about government-cutting than its activists do.

Or perhaps the rank and file just have longer memories. After all, Ronald Reagan, the man whose legacy Bush has supposedly betrayed, presided over a federal government that consumed 23.5 percent of GDP in 1984. Granted, this was at the height of the Cold War defense build-up, yet the figure far surpasses spending under President Clinton, which reached a low of 18 percent of GDP in 2001. Under Bush, spending has inched over 20 percent of GDP, a definite increase from the era of the "peace dividend." But spending is still far from Reagan-era levels. And the post-9/11 defense buildup (defense spending has increased by roughly 40 percent over 2001 levels, to nearly half a trillion dollars) accounts for the bulk of the increased spending. When you factor out spending on homeland security, domestic discretionary spending has *barely budged* under Bush.

None of this is to say that conservatives should be happy about Bush's spending choices. But it is to say that the president's domestic policy is in shambles not because he duped small-government conservatives into voting for big government, but because he hasn't delivered on the *kind* of big-government reforms he promised during the 2000 and 2004 campaigns. His administration has gone astray not because it has spent too much money, but because it has spent money badly.

This is a point that small-government conservatives sometimes seem to recognize. In *Getting America Right: The True Conservative Values Our Nation Needs Today*, Edwin J. Feulner and Doug Wilson—the president of the Heritage Foundation and the chairman of Townhall.com—cite three successful conservative reforms: the Homestead Act, the G.I. Bill, and the 1996 welfare reforms. All three, they argue, are examples of legislation that aims to "promote self-reliance" and make Americans "strong, independent, and useful to themselves." This is the tradition with which Bush has associated himself: a conservatism that allows room for spending increases, so long as they are channeled toward government programs that, in the words of Ronald Reagan's first Inaugural Address, "work with us, not over us," and that "stand by our side, not ride on our back."

Where does this recognition leave us? Because Social Security reform promised so much—including a first step toward coping with the looming entitlement crisis—its defeat has been the signal domestic policy failure of the Bush administration, and it's there that the conservative critique of this presidency should begin. The Bush years have represented the best opportunity to think seriously about the design of the welfare state, to seize the initiative from its liberal architects, and to find new ways to deliver essential services while building, rather than degrading, the capacity for self-reliance.

That opportunity has been squandered. And while the blame lies largely with President Bush, it also lies with a conservative movement that seems unwilling to tailor its thinking to the scope of the challenges ahead. ♦

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A Japan That Can Say Yes

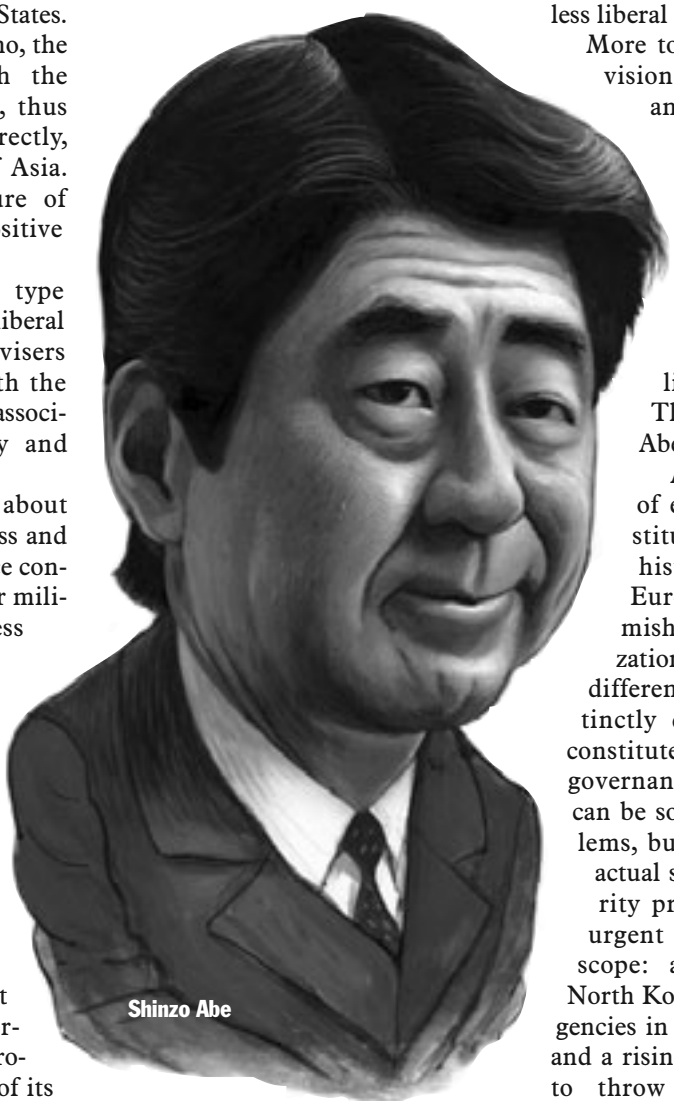
We should welcome the nationalism of Prime Minister Abe. BY DAN BLUMENTHAL & GARY SCHMITT

THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM is that the ascension of Japan's Shinzo Abe to the prime minister's post is bad news for Japan and, by extension, the United States. Abe is an ardent nationalist who, the thinking goes, will unleash the country's lurking militarism, thus isolating Japan and, indirectly, Washington from the rest of Asia. But this misreads the nature of Abe's nationalism and the positive effects it could have on Asia.

Abe's nationalism is of a type familiar to Americans. It is a liberal nationalism. He and his advisers equate Japan's well-being with the spread of the universal values associated with liberal democracy and human rights.

Much has been written about Japan's new global assertiveness and its decision to change its "peace constitution" and take on a greater military role in Asia. What is less discussed is the change that has put democracy promotion at the forefront of Japan's foreign policy.

In a joint statement with President Bush on June 29, 2006, Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi pledged to make democracy promotion the cornerstone of the U.S.-Japanese alliance. The prime minister then set about reforming Japan's overseas development assistance program, "the bread and butter" of its foreign policy. In the past, Japan assiduously avoided politicizing the program, giving loans and assistance to foreign governments without much concern for the character of the governments themselves. In the future, however, Japanese development aid will be linked to a recipient's progress in democratic reform.



Shinzo Abe

Illustration by Earl Keleny

Dan Blumenthal is a resident fellow and Gary Schmitt is the director of advanced strategic studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

True, Abe has made revision of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution—the so-called peace article—a centerpiece of his campaign for prime minister. And Abe has certainly been hawkish on both North Korea and China, recently musing aloud that Tokyo should think about acquiring military capabilities to strike North Korea before Japan itself is hit. (Abe himself jokes that his country, once confident in the goodwill of its neighbors, has been "mugged by reality.") But a liberalism that wants to defend itself is no less liberal for doing so.

More to the point is Abe's own vision of greater cooperation among Australia, Japan, India, and America, the four great Asia-Pacific democracies. If Japan is going to be a more confident actor in Asia and on the world stage, it will aim to do so in the context of this like-minded community. This vision could end up as Abe's greatest legacy.

Asia today lacks the kinds of effective multilateral institutions that have soothed historical grievances in Europe. What it has is a mishmash of regional organizations, composed of distinctly different governments with distinctly different views of what constitutes real security and good governance. These organizations can be sounding boards for problems, but rarely do they provide actual solutions. Yet Asia's security problems are increasingly urgent and transnational in scope: a nuclear, proliferating North Korea, radical Islamic insurgencies in transitional democracies, and a rising China willing and able to throw its newfound weight around the region.

To address these problems, Asia needs a new multilateral network based on the universal values that Japan has embraced. Washington

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should welcome such a development, with Japan, Australia, the United States, and India as its core. While Beijing will complain that a security community made up of Asian democracies is simply a tool for containing China, there is no reason to believe any of these democracies will be any less willing to engage with it. And the fact is there are other organizations in Asia, some of which China has been at the forefront in creating, of which the United States is not a part.

Moreover, like NATO and the European Union, this Asian club of democracies should have an open door. If a country, China included, moves decidedly in the direction of political reform, there will be no reason to exclude it. In the meantime, however, what an association of Asian democracies will do is give renewed confidence to the smaller states in China's neighborhood that the preponderance of economic, diplomatic, and military power lies with states that are more predictable in their ambitions.

Naysayers will scoff at the idea that Japan is in a position to play this kind of role in Asia until it has dealt squarely with the "history issue." True, Japan can do more to assuage the pain of the past and reassure others such as South Korea and the Philippines that it truly is a new country. But this will be difficult as long as the Chinese Communist party—itself responsible for millions of Chinese deaths—is leading the chorus against Japan.

For Beijing, Japan's past is a diplomatic weapon that can be used to isolate Japan from its neighbors and make other countries wary of its attempt to play a different international role. It has very little to do with moral culpability and everything to do with a contest of wills in which China is bound and determined to keep Japan from exercising that new role.

Washington should see China's stratagem for what it is and, instead, support Japan's effort to become a "normal" democratic power. ♦

Louis Farrakhan's First Congressman

Why is the press so incurious about the past of Keith Ellison? BY SCOTT W. JOHNSON

Minneapolis

AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME in history, it is a matter of note that Congress is about to receive its first Muslim member. Keith Ellison, currently a Minnesota state representative, is poised to succeed 14-term incumbent Democrat Martin Sabo in the Fifth District, which includes the city of Minneapolis. Ellison's endorsement by the Democratic-Farmer-Labor party is tantamount to his election in what is one of the safest Democratic seats in the country. Thus, at age 43, Ellison stands positioned not only to win that office but also to hold it as long as he chooses.

Ellison's Muslim faith has generated no controversy in the campaign. On the contrary, it has served to insulate aspects of his public record from close scrutiny in a city whose dominant news organ, the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, is a paragon of political correctness. With the exception of columnist Katherine Kersten, the *Star Tribune* has scrupulously avoided examining Ellison's long train of troubling associations, foremost among them his ties to the Nation of Islam.

Ellison's record also includes a multitude of embarrassments of the traditional kind. He fell afoul of the IRS after failing to pay $25,000 in income taxes; he ignored fines that he had incurred for parking tickets and moving violations so numerous that his driver's license was suspended more times than he can remember; he was fined for willful violation of Minnesota's campaign finance reporting law. It amounts to a striking pattern of lawbreaking since he undertook the practice of law in 1990.

But it was the link to the Nation of Islam that stood as the most serious impediment to Ellison's primary campaign. He addressed it in a letter to the local chapter of the Jewish Community Relations Council following his endorsement by the DFL in May. In the letter, Ellison asserted that his involvement with the Nation of Islam had been limited to an 18-month period around the time of the Million Man March in 1995, that he had been unfamiliar with the Nation of Islam's anti-Semitic views during his involvement with the group, and that he himself had never expressed such views. The *Star Tribune* has faithfully parroted these assertions as facts.

As a result, the three assertions have become the cornerstone of Ellison's campaign, securing him the support of prominent Minneapolis Jews and the endorsement of the Minneapolis-based *American Jewish World* newsweekly. Nevertheless, a little research reveals each one of them to be demonstrably false. Ellison's activities on behalf of the Nation of Islam continued well beyond any 18-month period, he was familiar with the Nation of Islam's anti-Semitic views, and he himself mouthed those views.

Ellison was born Catholic in Detroit. He states that he converted to Islam as an undergraduate at Wayne State University. As a third-year student at the University of Minnesota Law School in 1989-90, he wrote two columns for the *Minnesota*

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Daily under the name "Keith Hakim." In the first, Ellison refers to "Minister Louis Farrakhan," defends Nation of Islam spokesman Khalid Abdul Muhammad, and speaks in the voice of a Nation of Islam advocate. In the second, "Hakim" demands reparations for slavery and throws in a demand for an optional separate homeland for American blacks. In February 1990, Ellison participated in sponsoring Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) to speak at the law school on the subject "Zionism: Imperialism, White Supremacy or Both?" Jewish law students met personally with Ellison and appealed to him not to sponsor the speech at the law school; he rejected their appeal, and, as anticipated, Ture gave a notoriously anti-Semitic speech.

Ellison admits that he worked on behalf of the Nation of Islam in 1995. At a rally for the Million Man March held at the University of Minnesota, Ellison appeared onstage with Khalid Abdul Muhammad, who ran true to form: According to a contemporaneous *Star Tribune* article, "If words were swords, the chests of Jews, gays and whites would be pierced."

Even in 1995, Ellison's work on behalf of the Nation of Islam extended well beyond his promotion of the Million Man March. That year, he dutifully spouted the Farrakhan line when Qubilah Shabazz, the daughter of Malcolm X, was indicted for conspiring to murder Farrakhan. Ellison organized a march on the U.S. attorney's office in Minneapolis demanding that Shabazz be released and alleging that the FBI itself had conspired to kill Farrakhan. In a November 6, 1995, column for the Minneapolis periodical *Insight News*, Ellison wrote under the name "Keith X Ellison." He condemned a *Star Tribune* editorial cartoon that was critical of Farrakhan as a role model for blacks because of his anti-Semitism. Ellison argued to the contrary.

Then, in February 1997, Ellison appeared as a local spokesman for the Nation of Islam with the last name "Muhammad." He spoke at a public hearing in connection with a controversy involving Joanne Jackson of the Minnesota Initiative Against Racism (MIAR). Jackson was alleged to have said, "Jews are among the most racist white people I know." Jackson denied making the statement or insisted that it had been taken out of context. Ellison appeared before the MIAR on behalf of the Nation of Islam in defense of Jackson's alleged statement. According to the *Star Tribune* and the full text of the statement published in the Minneapolis *Spokesman-Recorder*, Ellison said:

> We stand by the truth contained in the remarks attributed to [Ms. Jackson], and by her right to express her views without sanction. Here is why we support Ms. Jackson: She is correct about Minister Farrakhan. He is not a racist. He is also not an anti-Semite. Minister Farrakhan is a tireless public servant of Black people, who constantly teaches self-reliance and self-examination to the Black community. . . . Also, it is absolutely true that merchants in Black areas generally treat Black customers badly.

The last sentence alluded to another of Jackson's alleged statements, providing a personal basis for characterizing Jews as "the most racist white people" she knew. Ellison's May 28 letter acknowledges only that others supported Jackson's alleged statement in that controversy while falsely denying that he himself did so.

Ellison first emerged as a candidate for public office in 1998, when he ran for the DFL nomination for state representative as "Keith Ellison-Muhammad." In a contemporaneous article on his candidacy in the *Insight News*, Ellison is reported still defending Louis Farrakhan:

> Anticipating possible criticism for his NOI affiliation, Ellison-Muhammad says he is aware that

Keith Ellison

Illustration by Drew Friedman

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not everyone appreciates what the Nation does and feels there is a propaganda war being launched against its leader, Minister Louis Farrakhan.

Ellison says now that he broke with the Nation of Islam when "it became clear to me that their message of empowerment intertwined with more negative messages." However, Ellison himself was the purveyor of the Nation of Islam's noxious party line in his every public utterance touching on related issues over the course of a decade. Moreover, Ellison's unsavory associations were not limited to the Nation of Islam.

Perhaps the lowest moment in Minneapolis's history was the September 1992 execution-style murder of police officer Jerry Haaf. Haaf was shot in the back as he took a coffee break at a restaurant in south Minneapolis. The murder was a gang hit performed by four members of the city's Vice Lords gang. The leader of the Vice Lords was Sharif Willis, a convicted murderer who had been released from prison and who sought respectability as a responsible gang leader from gullible municipal authorities while operating a gang front called United for Peace.

The four Vice Lords members who murdered Haaf met and planned the murder at Willis's house. Two witnesses at the trial of one of the men convicted of Haaf's murder implicated Willis in the planning. Willis was never charged; law enforcement authorities said they lacked sufficient evidence to convict him.

Within a month of Haaf's murder, Ellison appeared with Willis supporting the United for Peace gang front. In October 1992, Ellison helped organize a demonstration against Minneapolis police that included United for Peace. "The main point of our rally is to support United for Peace [in its fight against] the campaign of slander the police federation has been waging," said Ellison.

Willis was the last speaker at the demonstration. According to a contemporaneous report in the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, Willis told the crowd that Minneapolis police were experiencing the same fear from young black men that blacks had felt from police for many years. "If the police have some fear, I understand that fear," Willis said. "We seem to have an overabundance of bad police. . . . [W]e're going to get rid of them," Willis said. "They've got to go." The *Pioneer Press* account concludes with Ellison's contribution to the demonstration: "Ellison told the crowd that the police union is systematically frightening whites in order to get more police officers hired. That way, Ellison said, the union can increase its power base."

Ellison publicly supported the Haaf murder defendants. In February 1993, he spoke at a demonstration for one of them during his trial. Ellison led the crowd assembled at the courthouse in a chant that was ominous in the context of Haaf's cold-blooded murder: "We don't get no justice, you don't get no peace." Ellison's working relationship with Sharif Willis came to an end in February 1995, when Willis was convicted in federal court on several counts of drug and gun-related crimes and sent back to prison for 20 years.

The various themes of Ellison's public commitments and associations all came together in a February 2000 speech he gave at a fundraising event sponsored by the Minnesota chapter of the far-left National Lawyers Guild, on whose steering committee he had served. The event was a fundraiser for former Symbionese Liberation Army member Kathleen Soliah after her apprehension in St. Paul (under the name "Sara Jane Olson") for the attempted murder of Los Angeles police officers in 1975.

Ellison weirdly referred to Soliah/Olson as a "black gang member" (she is white) and thus a victim of government persecution. He described her as one of those who had been "fighting for freedom in the '60s and '70s" and called for her release. (She subsequently pleaded guilty to charges in Los Angeles and to an additional murder charge in Sacramento; she is serving time in California.) Still toeing the Nation of Islam line, he recalled "Qubilah Shabazz, the daughter of Malcolm X, [who] was prosecuted in retribution against Minister Farrakhan." He also spoke favorably of cop killers Mumia Abu-Jamal and Assata Shakur. (Shakur has been on the lam in Cuba since 1984; last year she was placed on the FBI's domestic terrorists list with a one million dollar reward for her capture.)

Having spoken out over many years as an advocate of the Nation of Islam under guises including Keith Hakim, Keith X Ellison, and Keith Ellison-Muhammad, Ellison might reasonably prompt Fifth District voters to wonder where he really stands. His recent account of the nature and extent of his relationship with the Nation of Islam cannot be squared with the public record. During his congressional campaign, Ellison has nevertheless held himself out as a friend of the Jewish people and of Israel. As if to shore up his identity as a Muslim activist, the executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Nihad Awad, flew to Minneapolis to appear as a featured guest (along with Ellison himself and Guantánamo chaplain James Yee) at an Ellison fundraiser in suburban Minneapolis on August 25. Awad is notable, among other things, for his past expressions of support for Hamas.

The *Star Tribune* didn't get around to reporting on the fundraiser until several days after Ellison won the September 12 primary. Ellison commented to the *Star Tribune* regarding issues raised by Awad's attendance at the fundraiser: "The Republicans are in a tough position. Iraq is a failed policy. They haven't done much for homeland security. We still have a health care crisis. The Earth is warming up, and they're not doing anything about it. What else are they going to do? They have to try to engage in smear politics."

Unfortunately, it won't be necessary for Ellison to come up with a more compelling response than that before he makes news in November as America's first Muslim congressman. ♦

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The Quiet Vietnamese

Journalist and spy Pham Xuan An led a life of ambiguity. BY DAVID DEVOSS

PHAM XUAN AN, the gifted *Time* magazine war correspondent who secretly served as a spy for Vietnamese Communists in Hanoi during the war, died last week. The obituaries were remarkably kind. An was remembered as an excellent journalist who by day filed dispatches for *Time* and at night sent microfilm and messages written in invisible ink to Viet Cong lurking in the jungles outside Saigon.

What the obits failed to reveal is that An, whom Hanoi proclaimed a Hero of the People's Armed Forces following the fall of Saigon, came to loathe the political system he had helped bring to power.

I first met Pham Xuan An in 1972, when I arrived in Vietnam as a 24-year-old war correspondent for *Time*. By then, An was a legend, a jovial boulevardier nicknamed "General Givral" after the Tu Do Street coffee shop he frequented. Despite the prevailing climate of suspicion, everybody trusted An. When the war ended abruptly in April 1975, his family was evacuated with other *Time* employees who wished to flee, while An remained and continued to file for *Time*. "All American correspondents evacuated because of emergency," he telexed New York. "The office of *Time* is now manned by Pham Xuan An." *Time*'s publetter celebrated his decision to stay and published a picture of him standing on a now deserted street smoking a cigarette and looking pugnacious.

I met his family at Camp Pendleton in California and helped send them to Arlington, Virginia, where they settled. Finally, after a year of silence, his wife received a cable telling her to return home. Despite serious misgivings, she did as instructed. Bringing back his family established An's loyalty to the new Communist government, but it did not prevent him from receiving ten months of reeducation in Hanoi.

In 1979 I returned to Vietnam. It was the first of 24 trips I would make to the newly united country over the next five years. It was difficult for a foreign reporter to get to Ho Chi Minh City during that period, but I finally managed to do so in 1981. The place I'd known as Saigon was grim. The hotels were full of East Germans, Bulgarians, and Soviets, whom the Vietnamese called "Americans without dollars." Secret police followed me everywhere. Thousands of Vietnamese denied employment because of their connections with the regime of Nguyen Van Thieu were fleeing the country in leaky fishing boats. Those who remained subsisted by selling family heirlooms.

My goal was to find An, but that was no easy task. Old city maps had been confiscated and burned. All but the major streets had new names. Houses still had numbers, but they were not in sequence, making it nearly impossible to locate a home even if you had the address. Finally, in desperation, I bribed a Hanoi official with baby vitamins and disposable diapers brought in from Bangkok and got An's phone number. I called and we arranged to meet at the Bird Market. "I'll be walking my dogs," he said.

An warned me not to say or do anything when we saw each other because police would be watching. Apparently, not even a decorated hero now in charge of diplomatic intelligence for the government could escape surveillance. The Bird Market actually was a sidewalk both sides of which were stacked high with bamboo cages filled with twittering birds that could be taken home as pets or simply released to improve one's karma. An had come with his German shepherd, and we passed each other with barely a nod. An and I got into separate cyclos, each peddled by an impoverished veteran of the South's defeated army, and I followed him home.

Once inside the house, An expressed great sadness over what had become of his country. "Why did we fight a war just to replace Americans with Russians?" he sighed. He confided that twice in the past he had tried unsuccessfully to smuggle his family out of the country. The first time the boat had had an engine problem. The second time, the boat had appeared to be seaworthy but the captain had failed to show. An escape was even more critical now, he said, because his son soon would be sent away to school in Moscow. An asked me to go to Singapore and seek out a mysterious man at a Chinese hotel who could arrange passage on a boat if paid the right sum of money. An said he was desperate.

I wrote a long memo to *Time* and sent copies to correspondents still with the magazine who had served in Vietnam. The plan was dangerous because of An's notoriety, I wrote. If a famous major general and his family were captured trying to escape, embarrassed Communist officials would execute them. I cautioned against starting a chain of events over which *Time* had no control.

Time decided not to get into the people-smuggling business, which was fraught with danger. In the Gulf of Thailand, Vietnamese refugees fell prey to pirates. Fishing trawlers rammed and sank their boats, saving only young women who were kept for amusement and then traded between trawler crews until they died or committed suicide. It was a difficult decision to make, but neither I nor anyone else at *Time* had experience dealing with these sorts of people, and the odds of something going wrong seemed enormous.

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An stayed in Vietnam, waiting for better times. They finally arrived in 1986 in the form of *doi moi*, Hanoi's attempt at perestroika. I returned to see him and his wife, Hoang Thi Thu Nhan, in the mid-1990s and found them both relatively optimistic. As An had feared, his son Pham Xuan Hoang An was sent to Moscow, but later he was allowed to travel to North Carolina, where eventually he received a law degree from Duke University. Although foreign law firms have offered jobs paying up to $4,000 a month, Pham Xuan Hoang An works for the Department of Foreign Relations in Ho Chi Minh City, where he earns $200 a month. Unlike his father, he is not a member of the Communist party.

Last week, Pham Xuan An was laid to rest in Saigon's City Cemetery. His final request was not to be buried too close to Communists. ♦

'The Expansion Process Has Begun'

Russia's imperial ambitions are alive and well.

BY REUBEN F. JOHNSON

"TRANSNISTRIA'S integration into Russia will proceed in several phases, and it may take 5 to 7 years," said the breakaway Moldovan region's foreign minister, Valery Litskai, to Russia's Interfax news agency earlier this month. "Russian society is now ready to expand beyond the . . . borders it has been forced into," he added. "The expansion process has begun." About the only phrases missing from this sinister declaration were the German "we need Lebensraum" of the 1930s, or the "you will be assimilated" threat of the Borg, the fictional half-human/half-machine alien race of the TV-series *Star Trek*.

There are many ways of trying to enlarge one's national territory—or to reclaim territory lost through the dissolution of an empire. The one tactic that has worked well in Europe's recent past is some version of the Sudetenland card used by the Third Reich to annex the German-speaking regions of Czechoslovakia. The playbook is simple enough. Agitate for the rights of a minority through PR campaigns led by a very vocal political movement within the territory's borders that has ties to (and surreptitious financing from) the nation seeking to annex the territory. This movement then engineers a "national" referendum calling for the territory to rejoin its motherland.

In the case of Russia's effort to assimilate the Transnistria region of the former Soviet Republic of Moldova, now an independent nation, the Kremlin has followed this well-worn script to the letter. On September 19, the slightly more than half-million residents of this region bordering Ukraine and Moldova (several hundred miles from the nearest Russian territory) voted to declare independence from Moldova with an eye towards an eventual union with Russia. Only about a third of Transnistria's population are Russian-speaking. Another third are ethnic Ukrainian, with the remainder a collection of Moldovan and other Balkan nationalities.

The legitimacy of this referendum was not recognized by the E.U. (or any other government), and has been denounced by the Moldovan government. But in Moscow the vote was heralded as the first step of a multi-staged effort for Russian reacquisition of territories lost after the fall of the Soviet Union. Moscow continues to maintain a military force of some 1,300 personnel in Transnistria.

Transnistria is not the only place where Russia and its political bedfellows are seeking to destabilize an existing government in order to regain Moscow's imperial holdings. Already there are plans in the works for similar referendums in the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia. Russia has been trying to fan the flames of nationalism in some areas neighboring Kazakhstan, where there are large Russian-speaking populations.

But by far the biggest target of these destabilizing efforts is Ukraine. Russian national sensitivities have chafed for decades over the fact that in 1954, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (who was Ukrainian by birth), moved the borders between the Russian and Ukrainian Soviet Republics, giving the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine to celebrate what he called at the time "300 years of pan-Slavic brotherhood."

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, calls for Crimea to be "returned" to Russia have never ceased. Their tempo increased after the election in early 2005 of a pro-Western president of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko. Moscow has tried numerous ploys—including a threat this past January to cut off all natural gas flows to Ukraine—to weaken Yushchenko's hold on power.

Not surprisingly, Viktor Yanukovich, head of Ukraine's pro-Russian Party of the Regions and now the prime minister, has used the issue of the Russian-speaking diaspora in Crimea to his own (as well as Moscow's) political purposes. During this spring's parliamentary elections, Yanukovich, who was Yushchenko's rival in the 2004 presidential race, promised to make Russian the official second language of Ukraine and to strengthen ties with Russia. Not surprisingly, his first foreign trip after becoming prime minister again this August was the one hour and forty-minute flight to Moscow.

What most concerns leaders in

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Ukraine and other former Soviet republics is that efforts by Russia to subvert their governments are not limited to these public campaigns by local demagogues and visible strong-arm tactics like threatening to turn the gas off. Russia, they say, is secretly planting operatives within the armed forces of these newly independent nations.

Government intelligence sources in the former Soviet republics bordering Russia have provided THE WEEKLY STANDARD a list of military officers from Transnistria who were issued false military service passports by the Russian Ministry of Defense. These documents, they say, fraudulently identify the officers as personnel of the 31482 Unit of the Operational Group of the Russian Army in the Transnistrian Region of the Moldova Republic. Russian authorities then transport these personnel to be put through the elite Russian officer training courses called "Vystrel," conducted in the city of Solnechnogorsk at the Russian combined arms training center. According to the documents provided by these sources, 15 or more Transnistrian officers were trained there in 2005 and another 30 were to be trained by the end of 2006. The training program is two to four months in length, and produces officers for all command levels and areas of specialization.

Military and intelligence sources in former Soviet republics with knowledge of this secret officer training program worry that this is a sign that Russia—now flush with oil wealth and intent on flexing its muscles in the international arena—is ratcheting up its efforts to intimidate, Finlandize, and otherwise assert control over the Russian-speaking areas of its former republics.

"You do not try to cover up a training program of this size unless you are someday planning on using these people to overthrow or otherwise take control of a sovereign government," said an intelligence officer in a former Soviet republic. "The facility at Solnechnogorsk is used by Russia to train numerous non-Russian military personnel openly and legally for peacekeeping and other joint operations. If then, in parallel, you are training officers from these disputed regions—officers that are pretending to be Russian personnel and carrying bogus paperwork—then it does not take an enormous leap of faith to assume that Moscow is up to no good on this one."

Russia is well known for the outrageous behavior of its ultra-nationalist politicians, and the world therefore tends to dismiss threats of Russian expansionism as clownish. But there is nothing circus-like about secret military training. And there is no guarantee that Transnistria is the only region where it is taking place. ♦

Fifth Column?

Transnistrian Officers Trained at Solnechnogorsk

Name and Position	Year Trained
Lukianenko, Col. Aleksandr, Motorized Rifle Brigade Commander	2005
Shavelev, Lt. Col. Vyacheslav, Motorized Rifle Battalion Commander	2005
Ponomariev, Lt. Col. Fyodor, Chief of Section, F-3, No. 1 Military Unit 60386	2005
Gromovik, Lt. Col. Gennadiy, Chief of Brigade Artillery Staff, No. 078 Military Unit 10524	2005
Ostrovskiy, Maj. Sergei, Dept. Commander, SF Detachment	2005
Gamartsa, Capt. Vasily, CO, 2nd Motorized Rifle Battalion, 40896 Military Unit	2005
Lupol, Capt. Sergei, CO, 1st Motorized Rifle Company, 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion 40896 Military Unit	2005
Paulesko, Sr. Lt. Ruslan, CO, 2nd Special Company	2005
Batyr, Sr. Lt. Oleg, Deputy CO, Mortar-Artillery Division, 30652 Military Unit	2005
Ischuk, Sr. Lt. Sergei, CO, Antitank Artillery Division, 60387 Military Unit	2005
Lichakov, Maj. Aleksandr, Chief of Staff, Motorized Rifle Battalion	2005
Krutovskiy, Sr. Lt. Denis, Intelligence Company Commander	2005
Polianskiy, Sr. Lt. Vladimir, Security Company Commander	2005
Shilov, Maj. Vladimir, Motorized Rifle Battalion Commander, No. 050 Military Unit 20365	2005
Krasnianchuk, Maj. Aleksandr, Motorized Rifle Battalion Commander, No. 087 Military Unit 30652	2005
Kuznetsov, Capt. Yuri, Motorized Rifle Battalion Commander, No. 040 Military Unit 10524	2005
Shevchuk, Capt. Yuri, Motorized Rifle Company Leader, No. 7, 1st Motorized Rifle	2005
Sprynchan, Capt. Yuri, Communications Battalion Chief of Staff, No. 040, Military Unit 10673	2005
Dziadul, Sr. Lt. Gennadiy, Motorized Rifle Company Leader, No. 020, 3rd Motorized Rifle	2005
Lavrik, Sr. Lt. Andrei, Senior Officer on Social-Psychological Issues, Educational Section, No. 040, Military Unit 00111	2005
Baranov, Sr. Lt. Evgeniy, Deputy Commander of Training Company No. 068	2005
Dovgulich, Col. I. A., Operational Section Chief	2006
Tekhneriadnev, Capt. E. N., Chief of Missiles/Artillery Armament Service, 1st Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade	2006
Kolesnik, Sr. Lt. I. N., Chief of Engineering Company	2006
Marinov, Sr. Lt. E. M., Chief of Staff, Artillery Division	2006
Angan, Lt. A.A., Recon Company Leader	2006
Orlov, Sr. Lt. R.A., Deputy CO for Educational Issues, 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion	2006
Kulachinskiy, Sr. Lt. V.S., Deputy CO for Educational Issues, 2nd Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade Mortar Battery	2006
Levchenko, Sr. Lt. S.I., 2nd Motorized Rifle Company Leader	2006
Marchenko, Sr. Lt. S.G., 3rd Motorized Rifle Company Leader	2006
Babiy, Lt. A.O., CO, Mortar Battery	2006
Tushevskiy, Sr. Lt., Recon Company Leader	2006
Donnikov, Capt., Deputy CO for Educational Issues, 4th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade's 2nd Motorized Rifle Battalion	2006
Isayenko, Sr. Lt. A.A., Deputy CO for Educational Issues, Mortar Artillery Division of 1st Separate Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade	2006
Komashko, Lt. V.P., Electronic Warfare Company of 1st Separate Intelligence Company	2006
Sheremeta, Capt. V.A., 3rd Motorized Rifle Company Leader of 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion Medical Service	2006
Nikolaev, Sr. Lt. L.I., Entanglement Company Leader of 1st Separate Engineering Battalion	2006

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Criminalizing Politics

The persecution of Karl Rove, Ken Tomlinson, and Scott Bloch continues a sorry Washington tradition

By Fred Barnes

Here's how Washington works. On September 28, 2003, the *Washington Post* reported that the Justice Department was investigating the leak to columnist Robert Novak of the name of a CIA officer married to Joseph Wilson, the former diplomat who had accused President Bush of lying about Iraq. The same story contained this bombshell: "A senior administration official said that before Novak's column ran, two top White House officials called at least six Washington journalists and disclosed the identity and occupation of Wilson's wife," Valerie Plame. The story further quoted the "senior administration official" as saying the leaks were "purely and simply for revenge." The White House's motive was to punish Wilson, who had traveled to Niger and insisted the president was untruthful in claiming Saddam Hussein had sought uranium in Africa.

But there was a huge problem with what's become known as the "1-2-6" story—one source, two leakers, six journalists—a problem exposed only recently. *Hubris*, the new book on the Plame case by Michael Isikoff and David Corn, discloses that the six calls to journalists almost certainly came *after* Plame's name had been revealed by Novak. A *Washington Post* editor had inserted the words "before Novak's column ran" in later editions of the paper, according to *Hubris*.

The timing of the calls is enormously important. If they came before the Novak column, they might constitute an illegal disclosure of a CIA officer's name, which is classified information. However, if the calls by White House officials came after, they were perfectly legal because the officials were merely pointing to a published fact. As it was, the 1-2-6 story drove the notion of a White House conspiracy to smear both Plame and Wilson. Plame, Novak had written accurately, helped arrange the trip to Niger for her husband as part of an official CIA investigation.

All this leads to Karl Rove, the conservative White House political strategist loathed by partisan and ideological opponents of the Bush administration. He had already been fingered by Wilson and others (they offered no substantiation) as the source of Novak's column. Wilson, in a widely reported jibe, had said Rove should be arrested and "frog-marched" out of the White House. Now, with the *Post* story, Rove was suspected of being a major figure behind what was deemed a conspiracy. Investigators at the Justice Department and later special counsel Patrick Fitzgerald would look into the possibility of an illegal plot against Plame and Wilson carried out by Bush officials.

It turned out, of course, that Rove was innocent. He was not Novak's source. Richard Armitage, then deputy secretary of state, was. Nor was there a White House smear campaign, before or after Novak's column appeared. But Rove paid for his non-sins. He suffered badly and unfairly. He was questioned twice by Justice investigators and five times by a federal grand jury. He was vilified by foes in the political community and the press. His Washington home was staked out by the media. His indictment was reported, though he was never indicted. Rove was attacked not because of any evidence against him—there was none—but largely because of his politics. He was a victim of the criminalization of politics.

This is an ugly phenomenon that has struck others—especially conservatives—in the Bush era. It's not new. It has claimed victims of both parties in the past: Democrats Mike Espy and Henry Cisneros, Republicans Ted Olsen and Caspar Weinberger, among others. But lately, along with Rove, it's the turn of Ken Tomlinson, former chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, who was subjected to a full-scale inspector general's investigation of his conduct when he sought to bring ideological balance to PBS. Later, when he was head of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), another IG's probe was ordered.

Another victim, Scott Bloch, the chief of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, has been investigated six times, all subsequent to his removal of "sexual orientation" from the list of conditions covered by anti-discrimination laws. He cited federal law, court rulings, and the statute governing his agency, none of which put sexual orientation in the same protected class—that is, legally protected against acts of bias—as race, religion, national origin, or gender. His

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"crimes," like Tomlinson's, are purely political, yet both he and Tomlinson were the subjects of probes involving criminal charges.

On its face, the criminalization of politics is harmful. It distorts the political system by giving judges and prosecutors and investigators of all sorts a large role. Accountability shifts from the political process to the criminal justice system, where it doesn't belong in matters of policy. The customary way of dealing with policy differences is through congressional action and elections. But criminalization takes political decisions out of the hands of voters and their representatives.

And there is a malicious aspect. Criminalization leads to persecution. It's a kind of perverted variation on the Al Capone approach. Prosecutors couldn't nail Capone for his major crimes, so they went after him for income tax evasion. That was justified because Capone was a genuine gangster. Now, instead of defeating a politician through the political process, his foes ferret out some infraction—any peccadillo, no matter how small—and get law enforcement to treat it as a crime, thus eliminating their opponent. It's the same thing prosecutors did with Capone—only the targets here are not criminals, they're dedicated government officials.

Ken Tomlinson

MCT / Stephanie / Saraceno

Over the years, a pattern has developed in the criminalization process. It has seven stages that lead, at best, to a sullied reputation, at worst, to jail time and financial ruin. Once the process gets started, it gains momentum. It's almost impossible to stop. That's especially true if a criminal investigation, rather than an inquiry into civil charges, has begun. Investigators, especially inspector generals in government agencies, are eager to find some wrongdoing. Otherwise, they may fail to satisfy those who asked for the investigation in the first place, often members of Congress.

The starting point, at least during the Bush presidency, is a conservative act—a decision, a policy, a public statement—that arouses liberals. Tomlinson put a *Wall Street Journal* television show on PBS, a liberal sacred cow, to balance the left-liberalism of Bill Moyers's weekly show. Bloch dropped "sexual orientation" as a ground for claiming discrimination in cases of federal employees. Rove's "crime" was not specific or narrow. A conservative Republican, he is the most effective political strategist in America and Bush's most important White House adviser. Driving him from Bush's side is what some Democrats dream of.

Stage two is the accusation. Tomlinson was charged with politicizing PBS, as if it were not already politicized by its liberal programmers. Later, he was zinged for trivial, unintentional misuses of government funds at the BBG for which his staff was responsible. Bloch had supposedly broken various regulations when he restructured his agency and reassigned staff. With Rove, it was allegedly leaking the name of a CIA official.

Then comes the actual investigation—stage three. It can be brutal. At Tomlinson's BBG office near the Capitol, his email and phone records were seized. In an unannounced raid, State Department investigators grabbed his files. (Tomlinson held the BBG and CPB posts simultaneously for two years.) The House Government Reform Committee sent a bipartisan group of 18 staffers to rifle through Bloch's files. Bloch was beset: He went from one investigation to the next, and the results of Government Accountability Office probes are yet to be determined. The fact that Rove was a suspect in the Plame leak investigation was a matter of public discussion and grounds for political attacks on him for three years.

Stage four: silence. Lawyers representing targets of criminalized politics routinely require them to make no public comments. So they can't defend themselves against political assaults. And their lawyers don't say much either. The fear is that public remarks might cause an investigator to recommend criminal charges. This is what kept Tomlinson quiet. Perhaps this tactic worked. The State Department IG who handled his BBG investigation was critical but didn't urge criminal action.

Stage five is isolation. As a general rule, few defenders step forward. After all, there's a formal investigation going on that shouldn't be interfered with. Even the White House doesn't always defend its own, and in some instances—Bloch's, for one—turns against them. Friends go into hiding. Meanwhile, in the case of conservatives facing possible criminal charges, the media go into the familiar "kick 'em when they're down" mode. Rove was hit with a media onslaught that included critical stories attributed to unnamed administration offi-

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cials, his putative allies. He didn't respond publicly.

Then comes the finding of fault. That's stage six. Even a picayune violation becomes big news. Tomlinson was found guilty of using his email for private communications, particularly to his horse stable. Those averaged probably one a day. What government worker doesn't do that routinely? A finding of fault makes it difficult to remain in office. An indictment makes it impossible.

Stage seven is the worst. It's the taint. Anything short of full exoneration leaves a blotch on one's reputation. Ray Donovan, labor secretary in the Reagan years, was tried on charges brought by a special prosecutor and acquitted, but still felt stained. "Where do I go to get my reputation back?" he asked. There was no place to go. There still isn't.

Let's look at the three individual cases, starting with Rove. After more than 30 years in politics, Rove "is more resilient than most people and has a thicker skin," Robert Luskin, his attorney, says. But when facing possible criminal charges, "you think about it 100 or 200 times a day. If it's not in your consciousness, it's right below it." In 2003 and 2004 and into Bush's second term in 2005, Rove showed no signs of being affected by the high-visibility investigation. He was consistently cheerful, according to White House aides.

But as the federal grand jury neared its end in late 2005 and Scooter Libby, Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, was indicted, Rove grew distracted. A White House aide told several reporters that Rove was hunkered down, though that was an exaggeration. "Within the White House, the most you ever heard was that Karl was slightly distracted, and I emphasize slightly," a Bush official said. "I thought he held up amazingly well." Still, the *Washington Post* quoted Rove "associates" as saying his preoccupation with legal matters "contributed to the troubled handling of Harriet Miers's nomination to the Supreme Court."

The press was relentless in speculating about an indictment. Last fall, CNN anchor Heidi Collins asked, "Is the man some call Bush's brain about to be indicted?" Ted Koppel of ABC said the indictment of Rove "had risen to the level of expectation." The *Washington Post* found a "warning sign for Rove" in the language of Libby's indictment. "Official A" was assumed to be Rove. "This kind of awkward pseudonym is often used for individuals who have not been indicted in a case but still face a significant chance of being charged," the *Post* reported.

These stories weren't painful to Rove, but others were. One TV and radio anchor joked on the air with a reporter about prison rape and a possible jail term for Rove. A *Post* article said "top White House aides"—Rove's colleagues—were discussing his future "with some expressing doubt that President Bush can move beyond the damaging CIA leak case as long as his closest political strategist remains in the administration."

Today, having been cleared by special counsel Patrick Fitzgerald, Rove still faces attacks on his reputation. "He leaked the name of an intelligence operative at a time of war," Democratic national chairman Howard Dean said in June 2006. This is not true. Rove, at most, acknowledged to two reporters that he'd heard Wilson's wife worked for the CIA. Meanwhile, Plame and Wilson have filed a frivolous lawsuit against him. And Democratic senator Chuck Schumer of New York has prodded Fitzgerald to issue a report that examines the role of Rove and other White House officials in the leak case. For Rove, restoration of his reputation must wait.

That may be true as well for Tomlinson. He weathered the storm of two IG investigations prompted by Democratic House members and intends to stay on, defiantly, as BBG chairman. In August, a bid by Democratic board members to oust him failed. The board oversees government broadcasting outlets abroad such as Voice of America and Radio Sawa. Tomlinson has been active in international broadcasting since he headed VOA from 1982 to 1984.

Tomlinson first encountered trouble after he became chairman of CPB, which funds public TV shows, in 2003. He did not propose to take any show off the air, but said PBS needed ideological balance. He wrote to PBS that *Now with Bill Moyers* doesn't "contain anything approaching the balance the law requires for public broadcasting." Tomlinson arranged for a show hosted by Paul Gigot, editorial page editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, to be broadcast on PBS stations.

In 2005, Tomlinson got a double whammy for his modest but brave effort to counteract the liberal tilt at PBS. First came a front-page story in the *New York Times* alleging "his actions pose a threat to editorial independence" of public broadcasting. That was followed a week later by a congressional request to CPB's inspector general to investigate Tomlinson for "making personnel and funding decisions on the basis of political ideology." Virtually all those decisions had been made with the approval of CPB officials. Nonetheless, the IG wound up faulting Tomlinson for being too political.

He wasn't accused of breaking the law at CPB, but he was at his other post at the international broadcasting board. The sequence of events here is indicative of how the criminalization of politics works. Tomlinson had frequently clashed on the BBG board with Norman Pattiz, the billionaire founder of the Westwood One radio group and a lavish Democratic contributor. After Pattiz signed a newspaper ad calling for President Bush's defeat in 2004, he was not nominated for a new term on the board. Then came a Novak column noting that Democratic senator Joe Biden had put a

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hold on a separate Bush nominee to force the renomination of Pattiz. That ploy failed. But several weeks later, three Democratic members of Congress asked the State Department IG to investigate Tomlinson.

The result was an IG's report breathtaking in its attention to trifling matters. The most serious charge was double billing BBG and CPB for work on the same day. Because of clerical errors, Tomlinson had overbilled BBG by $2,145 and CPB by $900. Tomlinson immediately reimbursed both. The *New York Times* had a field day with the report, saying the IG found that Tomlinson "used his office to run 'a horse racing operation' and that he improperly put a friend on the payroll." Tomlinson owns a stable with racing horses in rural Virginia and used office email and phones to keep in touch with that operation. His BBG job is part-time. The so-called friend was a 35-year veteran of VOA.

Scott Bloch

Lev Nisnevitch

Tomlinson hasn't suffered Bloch's fate of being abandoned by the White House. But he has been informed that he must drum up votes himself in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for his confirmation to a new term as BBG chairman. Bloch has been ostracized by the White House and was privately sent word that he should resign. Twice, he was threatened with firing if he didn't back away from protests he'd made about an IG investigation of his role at the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), a small agency assigned to protect whistleblowers and the rights of federal employees.

One of Bloch's first decisions when he arrived at OSC from the Justice Department in early 2004 was to strip "sexual orientation" from its special status in discrimination cases. It had been added by his predecessor—even though Congress and the Supreme Court had taken up the issue and failed to elevate sexual orientation to the status of race, religion, national origin, and gender. His decision quickly drew complaints from Democrats in Congress and pro-gay groups.

The struggle over Bloch's stand is largely symbolic. OSC has received few complaints of bias against gays. But it led to a detailed complaint to Congress and a withering barrage of investigations. And Bloch soon learned that the White House did not want to get involved in his fight—quite the contrary. A few weeks after Bloch's decision, a presidential spokesman delivered a public in-your-face rebuttal to Bloch. "Longstanding federal policy prohibits discrimination against federal employees based on sexual orientation," the spokesman said.

Bloch has endured, despite the six investigations, which have included questions about his and his staff's religious views. Bloch, a lawyer from Kansas, is a Christian. He and his wife Catherine have seven children. The investigations have gone from one by a House committee staff, to a committee hearing, to three probes by the Government Accountability Office, to one by the IG of the Office of Personnel Management. Contrary to Bloch and OSC, OPM, by the way, includes sexual orientation as grounds for filing a discrimination complaint. The criminal actions Bloch is accused of include making retaliatory reassignments of dissident personnel, imposing an illegal gag order on staffers, illegally barring staffers from communicating with Congress, and creating a hostile work environment.

It's worth noting that only one of these instances of the criminalization of politics—Rove's—can be blamed on the naming of a special prosecutor. It's no wonder special prosecutors have a record of overzealous prosecution. Unlike normal prosecutors, they don't have to weigh a potential indictment against all the other possible uses of their time and resources. Their sole purpose is to go after a single target or small number of targets. But the special prosecutor law has expired, and the decision to name Fitzgerald as a special counsel was an aberration, caused by unusual conflicts of interest at the Justice Department. Neither Tomlinson nor Bloch, however, was the victim of a special prosecutor. Enough investigative and oversight machinery is now part of the normal structure of government that determined foes can always find a lever to use against an officeholder. Inspector generals can be as aloof and stringent as special counsels.

Besides, law enforcement officials aren't the source of the problem. It's politicians who demand investigative frisks of their political and ideological opponents, along with those in media who encourage them, who are to blame. At a time when legislators are taking pains to define fair treatment for accused terrorists in U.S. custody, there should be at least equal concern for fair treatment of public servants. But that's not how political war is waged in Washington. ♦

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Haiti in Extremis

The poorest country in the Western hemisphere has bigger problems than poverty

By Nicholas Eberstadt

Port-au-Prince

A brief summer visit to Haiti—the beautiful, perpetually tormented tropical purgatory that occupies the western third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola—cannot help but focus the comfortable and well-fed foreign visitor's attention on two profound issues of the modern era: the reasons for the persistence of so much misery in an ever more affluent world, and the practical measures that might permit our world's poorest countries to escape from the heart-rending deprivation that they continue to suffer.

With an area comparable to the state of Maryland and a population (at about eight and a half million) roughly the size of New York City's, Haiti is closer to Florida—just an hour and a half from Miami by jet—than is Washington, D.C. But in a very real sense, the distance between the United States and Haiti is almost unimaginable.

By the yardstick of income, Haiti is by far the poorest spot in the Western Hemisphere, and in fact one of the very poorest places on the planet. State Department and CIA guesses put the country's per capita income at about $550 a year, or about a dollar and a half per day—but these formal, exchange-rate based estimates are highly misleading, if not meaningless. (Could anyone in the United States today survive for a year consuming no more than $1.50 worth of goods and services a day?) A better sense of Haiti's plight comes from comparisons of purchasing power. Perhaps the most authoritative global estimates of this sort have been done by Angus Maddison, the eminent economic historian. At the start of this decade, according to Maddison, Haiti's per capita output was *thirty-five* times lower than that of the United States. To get a sense of what this means: Think how things would go for your family if you had to get by for the entire year on just ten days of your current earnings.

Reuters / Corbis / Jorge Silva

A boy in the Cité Soleil, a Port-au-Prince slum

Haiti looks impoverished even next to other impoverished countries. By Maddison's reckoning, per capita purchasing power in Haiti is one third that of Bolivia, the poorest country in South America. There is no country in the Middle East or Asia with an income level as low as Haiti's, not even Bangladesh. And although sub-Saharan Africa is the epicenter of desperate poverty in the modern world, a majority of sub-Saharan countries enjoy per capita income levels that are higher than Haiti's.

Income numbers alone, however, cannot convey an accurate impression of the terrible deprivation that is the inescapable lot of the ordinary Haitian. For this, one must take a stroll through La Saline, or Bel Air, or any of the other wretched slums that account for most of the living quarters in Haiti's capital, the sprawling city of Port-au-Prince.

From high up in the hills that ring this city by the bay, the place looks sublime: On the horizon a perfect blue sky meets a shimmering sea to frame the vast metropolis below. The illusion is maintained only so long

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WPN / Lucian Read

A gang member in Cité Soleil

as one is sufficiently removed to view actual human beings. As one makes the descent into town, the picture quickly changes: The eye of Bierstadt is replaced by the eye of Bruegel, and then by the eye of Bosch. Once in the city proper, one realizes that the urban sky is so clear because Haiti is too poor to have air pollution. Gasoline and diesel vehicles are out of almost everyone's reach, and garbage is too precious to be burned on the street. But Port-au-Prince is not too poor to have sewage: That humid choking stench is everywhere. Unending makeshift shacks stretch from clogged "canals," through which water the color of petroleum slowly trickles: This is at once the communal latrine and the water supply for washing the evening's cookware.

Tiny storefronts, stocked with a few handfuls of merchandise, advertise their wares with homemade signs in French or Creole (the Africanized French fusion most Haitians actually speak), but many—perhaps most—of the thronging passersby cannot understand these because they have never learned to read. Children are everywhere, many of them painfully thin—some are clothed, some partially clothed, others not clothed at all; not a few bear the marks of illness, infections, or growths that have never been diagnosed or treated. The graying decayed remnants of a few kites entangled on telephone lines provide the only hint that any of these children has ever possessed or enjoyed a toy. As for the grown-ups on the street, some seem agitated, some enervated, but almost all are shrunken and weathered, aged far beyond their years: Young women here look middle-aged, middle-aged men positively ancient. And these are the adults strong enough and healthy enough to be out on the streets: The victims of Haiti's chronic life-threatening epidemic afflictions—malaria, tuberculosis, and (now) HIV/AIDS—are more likely to be out of sight, in the hovels of the back alleyways, resting and trying to cling to life.

Yet things are even worse—much worse—for most Haitians than this bleak street picture might suggest. For there is an important qualitative difference between grinding poverty and utter misery, and Haiti today lies on the wrong side of that divide. These impoverished Haitians lack more than money, food, medicine, schooling, decent housing, shoes, clean water, and regular electricity: They also lack personal safety and physical security. Haiti is a territory trapped between a state of siege and a state of nature—a Hobbesian nightmare in which violent and well-armed crime gangs operate essentially at will, effectively controlling much of the area in which ordinary people have to live.

The personnel of most foreign embassies simply will not visit many inhabited regions of the country without armed escort—and are specifically enjoined from visiting other places (such as the Cité Soleil slum, home to perhaps half a million people) under any circumstances at all. The third day of my Haiti visit, word went around that a man had been not just murdered but deliberately beheaded on the same street as the U.S. ambassador's residence—an effective message to the island that absolutely no spot in Haiti is beyond the reach of the crimelords.

The more well-to-do Haitians I met spoke of the daily terror of crime and violence that they face—robbery, kidnappings, murder just for the fun of it—and these are the Haitians who can afford safer neighborhoods, protective walls adorned with barbed wire and broken glass, or perhaps armed guards. The greatest burden of crime, violence, and lawlessness falls on the poor. "We can't even hand things out to people in the slums—it would endanger them," explained a foreign social worker with nearly two decades' experience in Haiti's worst neighborhoods. "You know what would happen if we gave little radios? The bad guys would know about it right away—and they'd come into those homes to take the radios, and more."

Lest there be a thought that Haiti's poor have nothing to lose from gangs and crime but their radios, Dr. Jean William Pape, the latter-day Haitian-born Albert Schweitzer who directs GHESKIO, the country's leading

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HIV-research institute/clinic, told me that the connection in Haiti between violent chaos and forcible rape was so immediate and direct that his staff compiles a "rape index" that serviceably mirrors changes in Haiti's security environment just by tabulating the number of victims streaming into his clinics after sexual assaults. In a country where the government does not even bother to compile crime statistics, this may be the closest thing to a proxy for local crime rates that exists.

Why is there no physical security in Haiti today? The problem speaks to an abject failure of both the government of Haiti and the U.N.'s latest Haitian intervention force (MINUSTAH—the Francophone acronym for "United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti") in their most fundamental of charges.

The Haitian government maintains no standing army—merely a police force of perhaps 7,000. Only some of those police show up for work, and a troubling proportion of those who do show up are compromised, on the take from the very predators against whom they are supposed to protect the public. To put the problem in perspective, consider this: New York City—with a population roughly comparable to Haiti's, and an environment incomparably more stable and secure—employs about 35,000 sworn police officers, a force perhaps ten times larger than the number of reliable Haitian police (the latter scattered over a country about two orders of magnitude larger in area than the five boroughs).

Apart from the occasions when they are identified as abetting kidnappings or gang rampages, Haiti's police force is largely invisible. In my first two days of ranging through Port-au-Prince, I spotted police officers exactly twice—one of these instances being a spin near the presidential palace, the Haitian "White House." In the slums of La Saline I passed a police station—but no one seemed to be there. Where were the officers—hiding inside? Possibly so: The *téléjiol*—Haiti's national word-of-mouth grapevine and main communications medium in this densely-packed, illiterate nation—was saying that a band of police had just found themselves outgunned in Port-au-Prince in a shoot-out with local gangsters, and had retreated to their headquarters. The police situation, however, is said to be improving. U.S. embassy personnel informed me that Haiti was training new police recruits in classes of 250—at which pace, by rough calculation, Haiti could muster a New York City-sized police force somewhere around the middle of this century, assuming zero attrition or mortality.

AFP / Getty Images / Thony Belizaire

A cart containing bags of charcoal used for cooking fuel

As for MINUSTAH and their 8,800 soldiers and police, some Haitians have taken to calling them TOURISTAH. As one explained to me, "We see them in our best restaurants, dating our women, and on our nicest beaches. The only place we don't see them is where the crime and violence are taking place, where they are needed." Constrained by extraordinarily restrictive "rules of engagement," these U.N. forces remain far from their goal of "stabilizing" Haiti. Indeed, when U.N. secretary general Kofi Annan briefly visited Haiti in August to praise progress and call for more international aid, his advance team—even with the MINUSTAH force at hand—judged the security situation too perilous to risk scheduling a visit to Dr. Pape's model GHESKIO clinic, located in downtown Port-au-Prince.

In a purely arithmetic sense, Haiti's poverty today is a consequence of prolonged and severe economic retrogression—we might even say economic implosion. According to Angus Maddison's estimates, per capita GDP in Haiti is roughly 25 percent *lower* now, at the beginning of the new century, than it was in 1945. Per capita GDP was nearly twice as high in Haiti as in Bangladesh back in 1950—but by 2001, per capita output was higher in Bangladesh than in Haiti (by about 15 percent). And Haiti has been overtaken by Bangladesh not only in raw economic performance, but also in basic social performance: By World Bank estimates, life expectancy today is fully a decade higher in Bangladesh than in Haiti; according to the U.N., in fact, Haiti's life expectancy is no higher today than it was 20 years ago.

Indications of protracted decline abound. According to the World Bank, Haiti's level of total cereal produc-

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tion is 20 percent lower today than it was in 1961: this, for a still predominantly rural society whose population more than doubled in the interim. Likewise, aggregate electricity generation is lower than it was a decade and a half ago—a modern record for futility surpassed perhaps only by Kim Jong Il's North Korea. Haiti once had a national railway line—but it is missing now, engulfed and absorbed in the brush. (Haiti has practically no forests—all the free firewood has already been taken.) Old State Department "Area Handbooks" speak of Haitian coffee as the country's main export; modern-day U.S. agricultural officials talk of "Haitian blue" in tones akin to the North American bison—i.e., a magnificent species, sadly no longer much seen.

For any small island economy, international trade is vital—yet Haiti barely engages in it. According to the World Trade Organization, total merchandise exports for Haiti in 2005 amounted to $473 million, or about $55 per person. And as with so much else in Haiti, trends are heading in the wrong direction. In the capital's tiny Port Authority, where cargo from vessels docked in the harbor is still unloaded mainly by hand, officials tell me that freight volume is down 50 percent over the past two years. Rough calculations suggest that Haiti—a country self-sufficient in nothing—is bringing in through its port system rather less than a pound per person per day of merchandise: food, gasoline, cement, trucks, clothing, paper, machinery—*everything*.

Haiti's other aperture to the world economy is an inland road through the highlands linking it to the Dominican Republic, its larger and markedly more successful neighbor on Hispaniola—but for the month before my arrival, that access point had been closed to all international commerce. It seems that Haiti had a newly appointed head of customs who entertained the peculiar idea of actually attempting to collect the statutory import duties listed on the books for incoming goods. Affronted and incensed, Haiti's major smugglers organized a trucking roadblock of the border, and then enforced it through menace. The government to date has proved incapable of lifting this self-embargo. There is quite a bit of talk about the lonely honest Haitian official at the center of this trade crisis. It is said, for example, that Transparency International is thinking of honoring him with an award—if he lives long enough.

It is no more than stating the obvious to say that Haiti's historical and political saga is intimately entwined with the dismal results we see today. We need not revisit every sorry stage and tragic step in the country's anguished 200-plus years of independence to understand the awful humanitarian spectacle. Yet the milestones of this historical legacy must be at least mentioned in passing. The African roots: over 100 tribes or peoples involuntarily transplanted to the New World to form the workforce of the French slave plantation system. The colonial interlude: the briefest, as a matter fact, for any country in the New World (French rule in Haiti lasted only just over a century). The slave revolt: following the American Revolution chronologically, but informed by the merciless logic of the French Revolution, killing or driving out virtually all of the country's "white" former masters. And then, with independence on New Year's Day in 1804, the troubled triumph of this Black Spartacus nation.

In 202 years of sovereignty, Haiti has celebrated over 20 constitutions; nine presidents-for-life; a handful of self-proclaimed kings and emperors—and, if one is counting generously, three peaceful and legal transfers of presidential authority from one legitimately elected government to the next, one of which involves the current occupant of the National Palace, President René Préval, who assumed office under MINUSTAH's aegis earlier this year.

Recurring military interventions from abroad are also part of the Haitian legacy, usually though not always by American forces. Most memorable were the 19-year Marine Corps occupation of the country that commenced during World War I; and, more recently, the U.N.-sanctioned American mission in the 1990s that temporarily restored to power Jean-Bertrand Aristide—the exiled, vengeful, radicalized, and corrupt, but popularly elected, president. (In 2004, when Aristide—reelected but by then disgraced—reluctantly relinquished the presidency of a Haiti in turmoil and disarray, U.S. Marines returned once again, before handing off international responsibility for the policing of Haiti to others under the United Nations flag.)

Haiti's heritage is so very African (only a tiny fraction of its people claim to be mixed-blood or "mulatto") that the West African traditions of the 17th and 18th centuries—the culture of modern Haiti's original enslaved ancestors—have not only survived, but taken on a life of their own in the New World. *Voodoo* is a touchstone here (a word, by no coincidence, that came from a language spoken in the West African country now called Benin). A local aphorism has it that "Haiti is 90 percent Catholic and 100 percent voodoo." Voodoo is, indeed, one of the country's two state-recognized religions. In its forbidding supernatural world, ordinary helpless mortals are at the mercy of a pantheon of *loa* and lesser undead beings—zombies, *loups-garous* (werewolves), and the like—who must be feared, and

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Reuters / Carole Devillers

A man throws water on a house set on fire by armed gangs.

may occasionally be traduced, but cannot always be propitiated.

The correspondence between voodoo and modern Haitian politics is more than incidental. Indeed, Haiti's most powerful and arguably most successful political figure from the past century—François "Papa Doc" Duvalier—was, literally, a voodoo doctor. "Papa Doc" had an M.D. in modern medicine, and trained at the University of Michigan—but he also carefully garbed himself in the dark black suit and the dour, unforgiving demeanor of *Baron Samedi*, the voodoo god of the graveyard. His control over Haiti was so total that his proposal to confer the next presidency-for-life upon his 19-year-old son "Baby Doc" carried a plebiscite by a vote of 2.5 million to one—so total that his decree to recast the Lord's Prayer as an appeal to the Almighty Papa Doc did not evoke laughter from the Haitians obliged to recite it. Papa Doc ruled through fear, and his agents of terror were his personal gangs of armed, unsmiling, sunglass-wearing thugs. These were the *tontons macoutes*: creole for "bogeymen," another homage to voodoo. They were not Haiti's first criminal marauders in de facto authority, inflicting misfortune or tragedy by whim on the uncharmed and unlucky—nor, as we sadly see today, were they the last.

Modern Haiti has experienced a "withering away of the state," to borrow a phrase from Karl Marx, but not at all in the way Marx anticipated for his Communist utopia. The government has ceased to provide security and physical safety in any regular or credible fashion. It no longer provides regular and reliable postal service. Its provision of electricity and water is limited and irregular. Health services rely mainly on the charity of strangers (also known as foreign aid).

Hardly less important, the government has excused itself from the task of educating the nation's young. It is only a slight exaggeration to say there is no public system, or even structure, for primary and secondary education in Haiti. The Haitian government, as best I can tell, does not collect and disseminate educational statistics any more—and has basically no idea how many of the country's children are in school, or out of it. There is no question, however, that the educational profile is dismal: According to the country's 2003 census, for example, less than a quarter of all Haitians live in families where the main provider has gone further than sixth grade, and half of Haiti's families rely on breadwinners who have no formal schooling at all.

Knowledgeable Haitians and foreigners with whom I talked guessed that maybe half or three-fifths of Haiti's

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Polaris / Rex C. Curry

A man in a trance at the yearly Voodoo festival in Plaine du Nord

children enter primary school these days, with maybe one third of that fraction completing their primary education. They also guessed that the Haitian government provides no more than a tenth of the spaces for primary school these days—the rest coming from private-sector "écoles" and "colleges," most of which are tiny, store-front for-pay operations whose modest tuitions nevertheless pose a grim food-or-schooling question to families who wish to see their sons and daughters get an education.

In today's Haiti, even a rudimentary education looks to be beyond the reach of the majority of children; mass illiteracy is the likely prospect for the rising generation. If the failure to provide security deprives Haitians of the environment in which material advance is possible, the failure to educate deprives the population of the tools by which to achieve such advance.

Where does foreign aid and foreign assistance fit into this gruesome tableau? In the United States and elsewhere, there are voices quick to attribute Haiti's dire circumstances to inadequate foreign generosity. According to the USAID "Green Book," however, Haiti received a cumulative total of about $3.5 billion (in 2004 dollars) in American aid (economic and security assistance) between 1946 and 2004—that is to say, over the roughly six decades in which its per capita output achieved a decline of 25 percent. U.S. aid, moreover, was just one of many sources of concessional official transfers to Haiti. According to the World Bank, since 1969, Haiti has enjoyed a cumulative total of $8.3 billion in official development assistance (measured in 2004 dollars).

To put these sums in perspective: The U.S. government places Haiti's official, exchange rate-based GDP for the year 2005 at $4.3 billion. While there are reasons to remain skeptical about that precise figure, as already noted, we can be more confident about another measure of the country's economic performance: merchandise export earnings. In 2004, according to the World Trade Organization, Haiti generated a little less than $400 million through international sales of its own goods. Against that benchmark, foreign aid transfers would amount to over two decades' worth of Haitian exports. Whatever Haiti's many problems may be, an inadequate volume of foreign aid is not one of them.

Although Haiti's prospects are severely clouded, the picture is not totally without hope. Haiti now relies upon a million-plus community of émigrés in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere for remittances that may be the country's most effective economic lifeline at the moment; those same émigrés could be pivotal in reconstructing and developing Haiti if the business climate warranted the effort, investment, and risk. Haitians are resourceful and hard-working, as their very survival under current conditions should attest. The nation of Haiti has capable, dedicated, and loyal allies, both foreign and domestic.

Some of the good works now underway are truly inspiring (among them, the Mother Teresa Missionaries of Charity home for abandoned children and the aforementioned GHESKIO HIV clinic/institute, both of which I had the privilege to visit). Other projects underway are incontestably beneficial and worthwhile, such as the microfinance initiative at SOGEBANK, providing loans of a few hundred dollars at a time to striving market-women who can put these to good use. And against all odds, some initiatives are bearing fruit: The nation's HIV

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Police and street cleaners in the central market district of Port-au-Prince

prevalence, for example, has been dropping in recent years, and may have been cut by as much as half over the past decade. But all of these individual pockets of promise are as exposed and vulnerable as sand castles at low tide—every speck of progress could be swept away, given the wild, unpredictable, and still-uncontrolled savagery into which this unhappy country has descended.

Haiti will be in a much better place than it is today when we can complain about corruption there. Haiti will be in a much better place than it is today when we can focus our policy criticisms on bureaucratic inefficiency, or wrongheaded economic and financial policies. What Haiti needs, more than any other single thing, is physical safety and security—for the sake of the poor as well as the rich. By itself, physical safety would constitute an immense improvement in the local standard of living (measured in any real human sense). An environment of safety and security would make it possible—at least theoretically—to achieve social and economic development and material advance.

For now, those desiderata are not even remotely realistic objectives. A cautious political survivor, President Préval now talks of "social appeasement" (a term that sounds no better in French or Creole than in English) and of opening a "dialogue" with the gangs that are murdering and terrorizing his countrymen. Safer streets are hardly the most likely outcome from such entreaties.

Under current conditions, foreign economic assistance—from the United States or elsewhere—can serve little more than a palliative function, akin to changing bandages on an open wound. While some will argue there is merit and even nobility in such service, we should have no illusions about what such service can—and cannot—do.

What do we—the fortunate souls holding U.S. passports, with warm beds and hot meals awaiting us—come home learning from a brief fact-finding sojourn to Haiti? In a sentence: *Security comes first*. First in the hierarchy of human needs. First in the prerequisites for economic progress. Nothing so elevated as "law and order"—apart from its unfondly remembered interlude under U.S. Marine Corps occupation in the early 20th century, it is not clear that Haiti has ever had *that*, and maybe not even then. Just physical safety and security.

Without security, efforts to better the national plight will be doomed to frustration, or worse. Foreign economic assistance will be mainly wasted, or worse. Humanitarian assistance efforts will find themselves on an endless treadmill. Economic and humanitarian assistance are no substitute for security and safety—cannot substitute for it, cannot themselves create it. And what holds for Haiti holds just as true for other tortured regions of the world where governments receive foreign aid, but local populations do not receive safety. ♦

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Robert Frost, 1958

A Touch of the Poet

The random wisdom of Robert Frost By William H. Pritchard

This is the first in a projected series of the works of Robert Frost that will include editions of his poems, essays, and letters, published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University under the general editorship of Robert Faggen. Faggen, the author of a book about Frost and science (*Robert Frost and the Challenge of Darwin*), has undertaken the truly heroic task of presenting Frost's notebooks which, 43 years after the poet's death in 1963, have been used only sparingly by scholars.

Spanning six decades, from the 1890s to the early 1960s, they consist physically of the homeliest of materials: Dime-store spiral pads and school theme books that Frost, so Faggen tells us in a useful introduction, kept with him in his movings from place to place and his busy life of reading engagements to diverse audiences. The editorial challenge they present is due in part to their helter-skelter character. There is no clear chronological ordering: a single notebook may contain entries from widely different times in Frost's life; the layout of individual pages seems almost wilfully capricious with sentences going in various directions. Deciphering many of them is also a problem—the word illegible appears frequently in the editor's interpolations.

The Notebooks of Robert Frost
Edited by Robert Faggen
Harvard, 848 pp., $39.95

But the deepest challenge they present, even to a reader familiar with Frost's poetry, lies in the way they simultaneously invite us to colloquy while fending us off. A 1917 letter of Frost's suggests a principle behind these notebook entries: "You get more credit for thinking if you restate formulas or cite cases which fall easily under formulae. But all the fun is outside, saying things that suggest formulae but won't formulate—that almost but don't quite formulate."

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In another letter, quoted by Faggen, Frost informs his correspondent, "I have written to keep the curious out of the secret places of my mind both in my verse and in my letters to such as you." The notebooks might be thought to reveal those secret places more than did his poems and letters; yet, in their combination of what the editor calls "candor and cryptic evasion," they offer no easy and direct road to what Frost the human being "really" believed about central matters.

One of the most charming and pertinent of the entries is this four-line ditty:

> *Nothing ever so sincere*
> *That unless its out of sheer*
> *Mischief and a little queer*
> *It won't prove a bore to hear.*

The enjambed "sheer/Mischief," with its accent on the first syllable of "Mischief" and the clever-surprising rhyme of "sheer" and "queer," puts sincerity in its place as something more simple, even crude, than the complicated play of a writer thoroughly committed to humor. "I am never more serious than when joking," was one of his repeated avowals.

The poem just quoted is an example of a Frostian "joke" that is serious as well. But in one of the many entries that address themselves to what a poem is, or is like, or should be like, we get the following:

> The poem must have as good a point as an anecdote or a joke. It is the more effective if it has something analogous to the practical joke—an action—a "put up job" such as being carried out as a serenade or valentine or requiem or memorial address.

Notable here is the insistence on poetry as an action, something carried out with purpose in mind (elsewhere he refers to a poem as a "deed"), a practical joke, "sheer/Mischief and a little queer." The reader is engaged in an analogous activity, as when, in one of the many entries directed at teaching, students are advised: "Don't tell the poem in other and worse English of your own to show you understand it. But say something of your own based on the poem (*not* an opinion of it though)." To respond adequately to the "put-up job" of a poem, it is not enough to call it beautiful or say you don't like it; you need rather to do something to keep the ball in play.

Another word for this recommended activity, within the poem or in response to it, is one of Frost's favorites—performance. He addresses the matter directly with this admonition: "Performance in poetry and in life is recognition and admission of the fact that things are not to be too well understood."

"Are not to be," rather than "are not," underscores the insistence that nothing be closed down too confidently, too quickly. Faggen reminds us in his introduction of the poet's respect for, indeed fascination with, uncertainty and chaos. This is the "confusion" that, in his crucial essay "The Figure a Poem Makes," he said the poem provided a "momentary stay against." Only a momentary one, mind you.

Lest one get the impression that the notebooks are wall-to-wall nuggets of detachable Frostian wisdoms, it should be said that much of the material is relatively, sometimes wholly, impenetrable, even with the editor's best efforts at annotation. For example, the following entry:

> Story of the Gaget Gimlet no Longer Manufactured.
>
> " " Hiring the One-armed Teacher
>
> " " The Woodpecker's Daughter.
>
> Nothing Fatal but Death Stigma
>
> Of an [?Albenes] Tatoo
>
> Brat-Buster
>
> Do you read [?Serviss]

The items that precede and follow this one shed no light on it, nor does Faggen venture to comment. It is one of the occasions in which an attempted look into the composer's mind reveals nothing—which is to say that any reader is going to skim a lot, looking for a moment when something shines through. Some items are repeated so often as to testify to how fond Frost was of them, such as "All men are created free and equally funny" or "I hate the poor don't you? Yes and I hate the rich. I hate them both as such." In one item he questions and answers this condition of hatred: "Why do I hate them. Because they bother me so. I have to think of them when there are so many other things I want to think of."

At moments we get memorable glimpses into Frost the bad boy who prided himself on "running away" from colleges (Dartmouth, Harvard) and, like Frank Sinatra, did things his way. He never missed the chance to bait Archibald MacLeish, especially after MacLeish's verse play *J.B.* was published. He takes MacLeish's much-anthologized poem "Ars Poetica"—whose final lines reverently intone "A poem should not mean / But be"—and corrects it, by moving the words around, to: "It should be mean."

"You have to be attractive enough to get people within striking distance," he noted, and the strike could be lethal. At other times the operative word is sly, as in this piece of timeless advice: "Keep on writing to her after marriage with a view to marrying her later in life when her husband dies or fails her." Then there are purely humorous entries that make us think of Mark Twain, as when Frost defines a "regionalist" as "one who picked out a region (such as the abdomen fundament or elbow) and has a pain in it."

The editor rightly points out the predominance of epigrammatic meditations in the notebooks, and Frost says in one of them that students "must be taught that the fun of being epigrammatic is the legitimate fun of literature." Although I haven't seen the comparison made, there are compelling similarities of temperament and serious wit between Frost and the great Renaissance poet Ben Jonson, whose first collection of poems was titled *Epigrams*. Jonson later published *Timber, Or, Discoveries* "made upon men and matter, as they have flowed out of his daily readings."

Perhaps the finest moments in Frost's notebooks are ones, always coming out of the blue, in which his discovery is such as to strike us as truly never said before. Sometimes they are about matters one wouldn't have

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expected him especially to reflect on, like the following two on alcoholic intake. In one of them he shrewdly imagines his way into the kind of person who is prey to drink: "Drink is a medicine for the too strict by nature. No one needs it who has ever lost himself without it." We are not allowed merely to feel superior to these overstrict people, nor are we invited to dismiss the following expansion of it: "Getting drunk is the glorification of waste—pouring libation {to the God of Waste} not onto the fire but into yourself. It is squandering with complete submissiveness to the nature of things your time your wealth your faculties."

Faggen comments on Frost's frequent preoccupation with "waste," including a resonant line from his poem "Pod of the Milkweed": "*But waste was of the essence of the scheme*." Perhaps there is something to be said even for squandering central human qualities—time, wealth, faculties—in the interests of a gesture as large-scaled as "complete submission to the nature of things." In such formulations as these, the clever epigrammatist moves into realms rather deeper and less to be taken in "fun."

"Life is a punishment. All we can contribute to it is gracefulness in taking the punishment." Nothing to ponder there; it has to be swallowed straight.

The editor cautions us to be wary of the "seductive finality" of some of the entries, and this is best done by trying to see the aphorisms and epigrams in the light of others that qualify or even contradict the one in question. Frost notes that "the tone of plain statement is one tone and not to be despised. All the same it has been my great object in poetry to avoid the use of it." These notebooks testify to how hard he worked at not being easily understood: "I should like to be so subtle at this game," he wrote in the letter quoted at the beginning of this review, "as to seem to the casual person altogether obvious."

For the game, which he played over 60 years, the following entry may stand as a motto: "I have made a life study out of what I can say." ♦

Famously Sick

Disease in the news, and the people who suffer.

BY RONALD W. DWORKIN

Today's celebrity culture shares much with the pagan culture of antiquity. In Rome, the daily doings of the gods and goddesses, their tiffs, their spats and trials, were the talk of the town. Conflicting tales were told about these immortal beings—did the goddess Diana turn Actaeon into a stag to be hunted down by his own dogs because he saw her naked or because he mocked her hunting skills?—but that was the price they paid for being well known. The gods and goddesses commanded respect, but they were also high entertainment value.

When Illness Goes Public
Celebrity Patients and How We Look at Medicine
by Barron H. Lerner
Johns Hopkins, 352 pp., $25

The experience in celebrity culture is eerily similar. Certainly the ways to achieve celebrity status recall ancient days, when beauty worked as a ticket, in the case of Venus, but so did skill as a blacksmith: the god Vulcan, for example, being ugly and lame—kind of a nerd—but mighty talented with an anvil and hammer. Thus, in celebrity culture, both Julia Roberts and Bill Gates can be celebrities.

Like the immortals of yesteryear, today's celebrities endure the same conflicting tales, even bald-faced lies, told about them, which the public eats up. Actors, politicians, and computer nerds ascend to celebrity status only to find that the most mundane aspects of their lives have become a source of public titillation.

The one glaring difference between today's celebrity culture and the old pagan belief system is that the luminaries of old were immortal. Magic might have caused them to be turned into cows, echoes, or trees, but they usually landed back on their feet when the spells wore off, and they certainly didn't get sick and die. In our celebrity culture, celebrities *do* get sick and die. Still, from an entertainment perspective, all this means is that the great mass of people have one more thing to gossip about to pass the time and enliven their humdrum lives.

Barron Lerner, a physician and professor of medicine and public health at Columbia, has given us a detailed account of what some of these modern-day gods and goddesses have endured in their fight for life. Had Dr. Lerner lived in ancient days, his work would have most resembled that of Hesiod or Pausinias, writers who recorded the life experiences of the gods and goddesses in minute detail. Lerner is, above all, a teller of tales, and he examines the lives of 12 famous people and shows how their respective struggles with disease resonated with the American people. Some of the celebrities are actors, a few are athletes, and one is a politician. A few of them are famous for no other reason than that they were guinea pigs for doctors' inventions: Barney Clark, for example, the first person to receive an artificial heart. But all of them are (or at least were) well known—the *sine qua non* of celebrity status. It is their well-knownness that captured people's attention and made people want to talk about them.

Although this is very entertaining,

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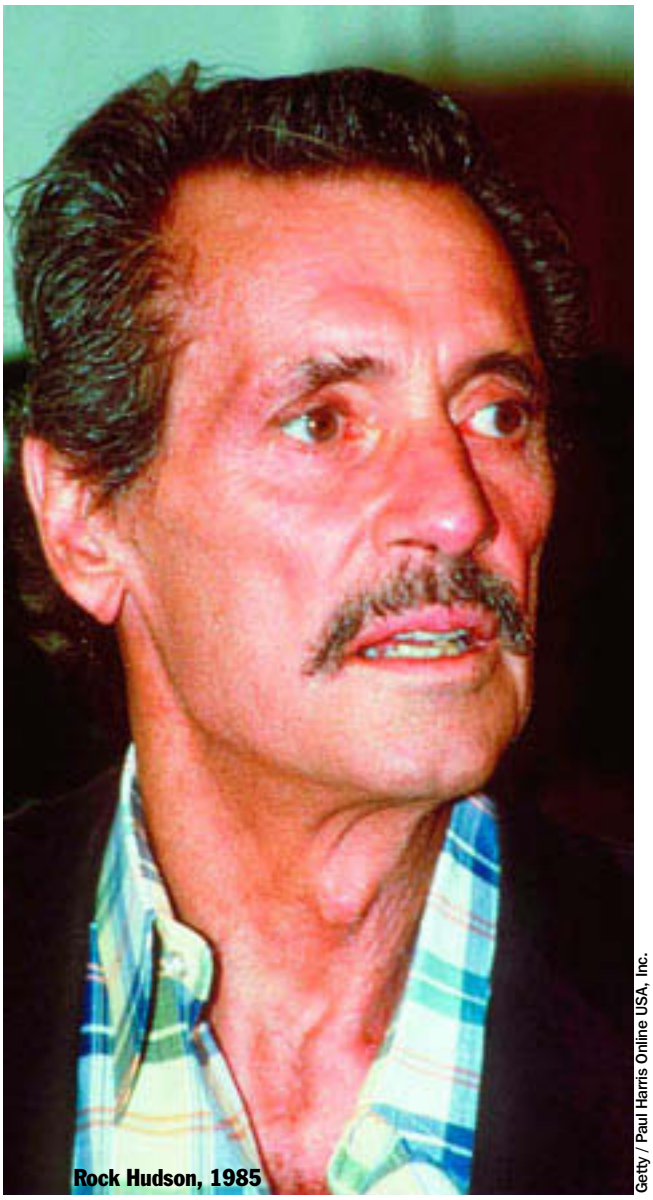
Rock Hudson, 1985

Getty / Paul Harris Online USA, Inc.

and in terms of writing style and investigative research Lerner's methods far surpass standard tabloid fare, it is not particularly illuminating. It titillates, but little more. Indeed, it is as much a product of celebrity culture as the celebrities themselves.

Specifically, Lerner devotes each chapter to the trial of one suffering celebrity, with the last paragraph in each foretelling the looming crisis for the next celebrity. But the tie between the chapters is artificial; there is no real narrative. Reading the book, I didn't see how Lou Gehrig's struggle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis in the 1930s stood at an earlier stage in the evolution of celebrity culture than Rita Hayworth's struggle with Alzheimer's Disease in the 1970s, at least not in the way that most historians define cultural change. Both figures were simply famous people who fell ill and were talked about.

To the extent that an evolution has occurred—for example, people's growing appetite for gossip about celebrities—one gets a sense that the celebrity medical experience is not determinant in any way and that it parallels the larger cultural trend. Celebrity medicine is just one more expression of the popular desire to hear more. Celebrity books that once covered crumbling marriages, illicit sex, and bankruptcy proceedings now reserve extra space for diseases.

Still, the reader picks up some interesting facts. Did you know that when Lou Gehrig gave his farewell speech in 1939, thousands of seats in Yankee Stadium were empty, as many people thought Gehrig was announcing only a leave of absence from which he would eventually return? Did you know that when John Foster Dulles was dealing with the Suez crisis, the effects of which reverberate to this day, he was suffering with shaking chills and abdominal pain, which eventually led doctors to his diagnosis of colon cancer? Did you know that Rita Hayworth once slapped a stewardess on a flight to London?

What the book lacks is a strong thesis, putting the matter of celebrity patienthood in some kind of sociological perspective. Lerner makes some thoughtful comments about celebrity sickness in a democratic culture, but most of his observations are derivative: for example, the notion that the celebrity disease culture has further democratized the subject of illness (as if anything in our society was left to be democratized). The synthesis and analysis part of the book, the intellectual heavy lifting, could probably have fit into a single essay.

Even the worldview of the crank would have been better than nothing. Reading Lerner, I almost longed for some good old-fashioned vulgar Marxism: the idea, for example, that advertising agencies are in cahoots with the medical profession, and that celebrity gossip is used to deform class consciousness and distract workers (big buyers of tabloids) from attacking capitalists.

Then again, Lerner can be credited with not making a mountain out of a molehill. Today's obsession with celebrity illness is probably nothing more than a reflection of people's deepest fears about disease and death. The fact that celebrities now have stories of struggle with an open-ended story line (some of the celebrities here actually survive) may simply be a testament to the enormous medical progress made during the last century. We have gone quickly from a time when death from diseases like leukemia and other cancers was certain to a time when death from such diseases is no sure thing, thus making possible the heroic struggle, with a chance for victory as well as defeat, the source of all great drama, even drama in celebrity culture.

Dr. Lerner has written a good book, and one that probably comes close to the limits of what can be accomplished, given the subject matter. As a kind of hybrid between serious sociology and first-class gossip, it would be perfect for summer reading on the beach. ♦

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Mary's Story

Or, the Good Woman of Long Island.

BY DAVID SKINNER

Alice McDermott, 1998

AP / Osamu Honda

Alice McDermott's new novel at times resembles the good manners of its heroine, Mary Keane, reticently avoiding any salacious or melodramatic interest in its characters. It positions the story several degrees from the height of drama and is so underwritten that several of the wonders and calamities it contains are delivered almost as asides.

After This
by Alice McDermott
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 279 pp., $24

The central character, Mary Keane, meets the man she is going to marry; but this particular scene is a mere squib next to the longer evocation of a bad date she has on the same day with an eager suitor she most certainly does not want to marry. Later in the novel John Keane, Mary's husband, experiences great pain in his leg and orders his sons to jerry-rig a system of pullies, involving books and an army boot, to offset the agony with additional pain. He might die like this, John thinks. But no, he won't, the author mentions in passing, and the episode is all but forgotten, until many pages later the cause of his pain is explained in another underhyped report.

In *After This* McDermott has built her own literary contraption, one designed for delayed gratification and hinged to the reader's upended sense that what is right in front of him may, like small talk at a funeral, have little to do with what is important. The word "here" plays an important and ironic role, with McDermott using it to introduce the new into the familiar. Consider the brief passage in which Mary Keane meets her future husband as she is having lunch:

> And here, of all things, was desire again. . . . Here was the boudoir air of respectable Schrafft's, with its marble counters and pretty lamps and lunchtime bustle (ten minutes until she should be back at her desk), perfume and smoke, with the war over and another life begun and mad April whipping through the streets again. And here she was at thirty, just out of church (a candle lit every lunch hour, although the war was over), and yearning now with every inch of herself to put her hand to the worn buckle at the stranger's waist, a palm to his smooth belly. A man she'd never see again. Good luck.

"Here," like "this" in the title, evokes what cannot be simply pointed out, what is not right here. And set against such explicit though misleading instructions to the reader's attention are a series of epochal shifts at the novel's major junctures. From Mary Keane's singlehood the novel jumps to her in maternal form, at the beach, watching her three children playing, another one on the way. And within its episodes—such as the news that John Keane won't die in his bedroom, his leg suspended by rope—the future is apt to be suddenly announced, without fanfare, like some kitchen-table gossip—"You know what happened to him, right?"—though more gently.

"Here" for Alice McDermott is, once again, Queens and Long Island and its Irish Catholic tribe of middle-class families. In 1998, she delivered the quintessential portrait of this community in *Charming Billy*, through her tracing of the life and death of an incurable alcoholic, one blessed with the gift of gab and great stores of kindness besides.

In *After This*, Mary Keane is likable and sympathetic, a woman defined by her obligations, but not fascinating, a gateway character, a good example of McDermott in her sensibility mode, where she is quietly unerring. But after beginning with Mary's delicate perceptions, the novel slowly builds until McDermott seems to be in the hunt for much bigger game with Mary's difficult husband, her children, and her noodge of a friend, Pauline.

Comprising the stories of two generations of Keanes, *After This* is, however,

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decidedly not a family saga. Though history intervenes, sending one of Mary's sons, Jacoby, into the Vietnam war (this chapter having the slowest pulse of any in the book), familial preoccupation with the kind of people our loved ones are and are becoming define its author's major concern. But only when the children are verging on adulthood does McDermott leave their parents behind and presume to describe their lives in a separate light. This shift in perspective introduces some of the novel's best writing, as the reader follows Annie, the literary daughter, to England for study, and Michael, the bright troublemaker, to teachers' college and his favorite hangout, a dive that would make most dives seem respectable.

In handling the private side of the public equation, McDermott is superb, as Mary Keane looks around for signs of grace in everyday life, never seeing any in the naming of her son Jacob after a fallen soldier her husband knew in World War II. Typically, but perfectly as well, Mary Keane objects to naming her son Jacob on the grounds that it's, well, a Jewish name, right? The search for grace in the case of Jacob comes up empty, with a veil drawn across its conclusion. The reader follows Jacob no further than the airplane ride taking him to war.

McDermott begins by offering acorns instead of oaks. On the first page, wind-kicked dust makes Mary Keane think of the trail of paper and whatnot blowing across the earth's surface, "the paper detritus that she had somewhere read, or had heard it said, trails armies, or was it (she had seen a photograph) the scraps of letter and wrappers and snapshots that blow across battlefields after all but the dead have fled?"

This is also the novel's distance from war, the jungles of Vietnam as encountered from the family's kitchen table. While this may make McDermott sound like a reluctant storyteller, in *After This* she remains in her realist mode and yet is more adventurous than usual, and the results are rarely sentimental, often humorous, and several times exquisite. ♦

On Tripoli's Shores

Two hundred years ago, the terrorists were pirates.

BY JOSHUA SPIVAK

There has been an explosion in biographies of the Founding Fathers, and not surprisingly, a number of historians have homed in on a particular irritant of the era that seems to have resonances for our times: America's battles against the Muslim Barbary states. These all-but-forgotten campaigns—mostly remembered today for "the Shores of Tripoli" in the Marine Corps Hymn—were America's first real foreign adventure.

The Barbary Wars
American Independence in the Atlantic World
by Frank Lambert
Hill & Wang, 240 pp., $24

A number of recent works have looked more closely at the affair and attempted to tie this earlier conflict to our current difficulties with the Muslim world. On paper, the connections look promising. A few small, vicious, despotic Muslim regimes prey on the West. Most of Europe chooses to buy off the problem, and look the other way as their citizens are held hostage, rather than risk their financial benefits by confronting the threat. It is left to America to take a stand, eventually defeating several of the Barbary states in battle and freeing most of the foreign hostages.

Some view all this with hope; after all, America ultimately won. Others with apprehension, as it took some 30-odd years for victory.

While acknowledging these similarities, Frank Lambert, in this concise and insightful book, deftly undercuts the analogy with today's war. Unlike their contemporary counterparts, the Barbary states were not motivated by an ideological belief in the growth of the Islamic world, or in killing infidels. Rather, their goal was always the same: Simply extort tribute from Western powers, and ransom hostages for money. From the leaders to the lower level pirates, Lambert finds no suicidal fanatics bent on destroying a Western way of life, but sailors simply looking to make a buck.

Rather than shoehorning the Barbary Wars into the framework of America's fight against terrorism, Lambert argues convincingly that these wars represent a different sort of triumph—a victory for America's economic prospects. Victory in these wars helped allow American shippers to sail the Atlantic and Mediterranean without fear of piracy and being taken hostage. The Barbary Wars were an extension of the country's struggle for freedom.

After gaining political independence, America faced a major problem: As a country of traders, Americans had to rely on their erstwhile foe to keep international commerce safe and free. And Britain was both ideologically and philosophically uninterested in helping the nascent country. Britain and the rest of the world operated under the tenets of mercantilism, which held that one country's economic gain was a loss for everyone else—a zero-sum game of international commerce.

Lambert wisely focuses on this unpleasant after-effect of the Revolutionary War. Americans proved to be naive, and somewhat unsuccessful, participants in this world. Many no doubt agreed with Thomas Jefferson that "free Trade would help everyone . . . expanding the overall volume of commerce so greatly that an individ-

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ual country would benefit from even a modest share." But the Europeans, still focused on their centuries-long struggles for power, were not that interested in Jefferson's revolutionary philosophy. And of course, the extortionist states located on the northern coast of Africa—Algiers, Tripoli, Morocco, and Tunisia—were not about to sign on to America's revolutionary economic ideals. The result was that these Barbary states were actually helping out the major maritime powers, such as Britain, by attacking possible competitors. And the pirates, even with only a few ships, were a serious problem.

The most interesting point here is the explanation of why the pirates, even though few in number, posed such a problem. Lambert writes—though does not really delve into thoroughly—that the ships required insurance, provided by British underwriters. Once America's traders proved to be vulnerable to the Barbary states, the insurance spiked to prohibitively high levels, raising the cost of American goods. Therefore, "[t]he capture of just one American vessel had brought U.S. commerce in the Mediterranean to a standstill." Action had to be taken, but what type of action was the big debate for Americans.

America's troubles with the Barbary states started early. Though the emperor of Morocco brought up the idea of signing a treaty as early as 1778, due to the slow action of a Continental Congress focused on fighting a war, America did not make a significant countermove. By 1784, the emperor decided to act—by capturing an American ship. Americans eventually bribed the ship to freedom, but that set up a continual path to dealing with the Barbary states: fulminations by successive American governments and bribery. And failure to develop a strong navy—an ideological position that many of the early Anti-Federalists held—proved a major impediment to any action but submission to the tribute system.

Eventually, after Jefferson came to power in 1801, the country was forced to confront the menace. A contingent of ships and soldiers attacked Tripoli. The American consul William Eaton led a small contingent of Marines and Arab troops, under the command of the Pasha of Tripoli's brother Hamet, to conquer the city of Derna. At the same time Stephen Decatur brought the naval battle to life by firing on Tripoli and burning a captured ship. After running up a string of victories, Eaton wanted to press forward but was met with resistance by both the less-than-heroic Hamet and a skeptical U.S. government, which pushed a treaty on Tripoli.

Custom Medical Stock Photo

Stephen Decatur shoots a Barbary pirate

The United States spent the next decade sparring with and bribing the Barbary states, but international piracy was a back-burner issue compared with troubles with the British and French. Once America finally made peace with England to end the War of 1812, and the country was freed from its concerns about Napoleon, a naval contingent, led by Decatur, took care of the Barbary states as a serious threat.

Lambert gives a credible, and at times riveting, account of the war. But he could have offered a broader explanation of the internal disputes in America. Specifically, *The Barbary Wars* glosses over this question: If shipping and trading were so critical to the country's well-being, how could Jefferson ever have contemplated embargoing America's ports? It would also have benefited from a larger discussion of the effect of the Napoleonic wars on the American economy.

This is a quick, insightful read. Lambert makes a compelling case for focusing on the economic underpinnings of the conflict rather than on the religious and social implications. And even though the story of the Barbary Wars does not serve as a roadmap to the war on terror, it does lay out how America struggled and ultimately succeeded in establishing its economic independence. ♦

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The Appiahn Way

How to Do the Right Thing in the 21st century.

BY JAMES D. SEATON

Kwame Anthony Appiah's defense of "cosmopolitanism" is, to its credit, more likely to irritate militant cosmopolitans than those who have not heard that caring about one's own family or country more than for other families or countries is now morally suspect.

Understandably, the former might expect a book titled *Cosmopolitanism* to explain why their point of view is morally superior to patriotism or to "family values." Appiah, however, feels no need to offer any such explanations. The "partial cosmopolitanism" that he champions rejects what Appiah calls the "icy impartiality" of "the hard-core cosmopolitan," whose philosophy demands that one show no more concern for one's parents, children, or fellow citizens than for any other inhabitant of the planet. For Appiah "the position worth defending" is a cosmopolitanism that finds nothing wrong with the human propensity to be "partial to those closest to us: to our families, our friends, our nations." Appiah cites with approval Edmund Burke's observation that "to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections."

Cosmopolitanism
Ethics in a World of Strangers
by Kwame Anthony Appiah
Norton, 196 pp., $23.95

Although Appiah believes that "the richest nations" should spend far more than they currently do on behalf of the poor around the world, he insists that even citizens of wealthy countries have no reason to feel guilty for feeling that "whatever my basic obligations are to the poor far away, they cannot be enough, I believe, to trump my concerns for my family, my friends, my country." Appiah goes even further in defense of common sense and against the "hard-core" or "moral cosmopolitans." Not only is there nothing wrong with helping those close to you before helping those far away, there is nothing wrong with sometimes not helping anybody and instead reading a book or going to a concert. As Appiah puts it, "You are not killing anyone by going to the opera."

Appiah thus takes issue with his Princeton colleague Peter Singer and the thesis Appiah dubs "the Singer principle." That is: "If you can prevent something bad from happening at the cost of something less bad, you ought to do it." Appiah quotes philosopher Peter Unger's translation of "the Singer principle" into practical terms: "It's seriously wrong not to send to the likes of UNICEF and OXFAM, about as promptly as possible, nearly all your worldly wealth." Rightly suspecting that when arguments conclude with such demands, readers are more likely to reject the arguments than obey the demands, Appiah observes that the philosophical issue here is not cosmopolitanism: "What is wrong with 'the Singer principle,'" he persuasively argues, "isn't that it says we have incredible obligations to foreigners; the problem is that it claims we have incredible obligations."

Appiah offers an alternative to "the Singer principle" reasonable enough to actually work in practice: "If you are the person in the best position to prevent something really awful, and it won't cost you much to do so, do it."

Raised in Africa, educated at Cambridge, and now teaching at Princeton, Appiah knows from actual experience what life is like in several different cultures. He has relatives who believe in "the theory of witchcraft," and he patiently explains why, in certain circumstances, the belief that diseases are caused by witchcraft can be just as reasonable as the theory that bacteria or viruses are to blame. ("What's wrong with the theory of witchcraft," he observes, "is not that it doesn't make sense but that it isn't true.") Likewise, despite the horror female circumcision arouses in the West, Appiah knows, or knows people who know, "young women who look forward to the rite, think that it allows them to display courage, declare it makes their sexual organs more beautiful, and insist that they enjoy sex enormously."

All the more effective, then, are Appiah's criticisms of some of the shibboleths of multiculturalism. He rejects the claims of those advocates of diversity—he calls them the "cultural patrimony crowd"—whose goal of preserving distinct cultures leads them to see every instance of interchange as an example of cultural imperialism. In the name of multicultural diversity they would attempt to seal off every putative cultural group as though it were a corporation with a brand name to protect.

As Appiah puts it, "In the name of authenticity, they would extend this peculiarly Western, and modern, conception of ownership to every corner of the earth. . . . Ashanti Inc., Maori Inc., Norway Inc.: All rights reserved."

One of the most attractive aspects of Appiah's cosmopolitanism is its recognition that culture at its best reveals a shared humanity transcending national and ethnic boundaries. Appiah declares, "My people—human beings—made the Great Wall of China, the Chrysler Building, the Sistine Chapel: these things were made by creatures like me, through the exercise of skill and imagination."

Who would want to argue with such sentiments? The chapter on "The Counter-Cosmopolitans" identifies only two groups on the other side: "global Muslim fundamentalists" and

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"Christian fundamentalists in the United States." Appiah's comparisons between the two mark one of the few times in the book where he allows multiculturalist pieties to trump common sense. The two are similar, he asserts, "in many ways." Both reject "traditional religious authorities" and interpret their holy books for themselves even though both share "an ignorance of the original languages of the Scriptures they interpret." Both groups "think that there is one right way for all human beings to live."

Surely, however, the admonition that one should "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things which are God's" seems to leave more room for the "variety of political arrangements" Appiah's cosmopolitanism prizes than does the Muslim concept of *sharia.* Though he ignores this difference in theological principle, Appiah does acknowledge that there is at least one important difference in practice: "So far as I know, no large organized Christian terror network is planning attacks on Muslim countries or institutions."

On the other hand, Appiah does point out that there are "Christian terrorists" like Eric Rudolph. Emphasizing that he is not "equating" Rudolph's crimes—leaving bombs at a lesbian bar, an abortion clinic, and in a park at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics—with the "multinational murder spree" of Osama bin Laden, Appiah nevertheless asserts that "it is easier for us to remember that Osama bin Laden is not the typical Muslim when we recall that Eric Rudolph is not the typical Christian."

Appiah does not mention that Rudolph's terrorism was condemned by all major Christian organizations, though he discovers support for Rudolph "in places like Murphy, North Carolina." He is, however, honest enough to note that "the popularity Osama enjoys . . . makes him a far from marginal figure" (unlike Rudolph) whose "multinational murder spree" cannot be equated to Rudolph's crimes. Once these admissions are made, however, the point of

Zuma Press / Beowulf Sheehan

Kwame Appiah

Appiah's comparison—that the "typical Muslim" is no more friendly to terrorism than the "typical Christian"—seems to be lost.

Despite occasional special pleading, Appiah's general position is so reasonable that one wonders why it requires a special label. Although there may be few "hard-core cosmopolitans," aren't most of us already the "partial cosmopolitans" Appiah wants us to be? The original cosmopolitans, after all, were rather "hard-core" themselves; they demonstrated what Appiah calls "the general Cynic skepticism toward custom and tradition" by copulating in public like dogs ("cynic" is ancient Greek for "doglike").

On Appiah's own showing, the moral difference between his own "partial cosmopolitanism" and conventional views is not a matter of principle but only of degree; as he puts it, "The real challenge to cosmopolitanism isn't the belief that other people don't matter at all; it's the belief that they don't matter very much." Beyond making clear the foolishness of "incredible obligations," Appiah does not explain how to identify the line between "not very much" and "enough." Likewise, the political implications of his cosmopolitanism are vague. His cosmopolitanism "prizes a variety of political arrangements, provided, of course, each state grants every individual what he or she deserves."

Of course! Political arrangements are only illegitimate if they somehow fail to "grant every individual what he or she deserves," a goal Plato thought could be achieved only in his ideal republic, and even there only with great difficulty. Despite Appiah's appreciation of variety, his proviso would seem to offer a rationale for intervention broader than anything Woodrow Wilson, let alone George W. Bush, ever envisioned. These lapses, however, are occasional and limited; what distinguishes *Cosmopolitanism* is its sustained commitment to clear thinking and common sense. This achievement should not be underrated at a time when, almost always in the academy, and all too often in public speech, the slogans of "diversity" and "multiculturalism" trump common sense. If Kwame Anthony Appiah fails in the lesser goal of defining "cosmopolitanism" as a distinctive creed, that may be a condition of his success in his larger purpose of outlining an "ethics in a world of strangers" that seems both reasonable and possible. ♦

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Bulldozing Islam

Historic destruction, Wahhabi style.

BY IRFAN AL-ALAWI AND STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Heritage Research Foundation

Mecca

The Saudi press expended a lot of energy this summer highlighting the damage to buildings and other infrastructure in Lebanon during the Hezbollah-Israel war. There was a reason: Fundamentalist Muslim clerics in the kingdom wish to divert attention from their own wholesale devastation of ancient Islamic sacred architecture and other monuments on their own soil.

The Saudis and other Muslim states have spent almost 40 years blustering over alleged Israeli threats to the Islamic precincts on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem—including the oldest artifact of Muslim architecture, the Dome of the Rock. And they were quick to protest against Western "insensitivity" when Muhammad was depicted in Danish newspaper cartoons. But they remain silent as Saudi radicals demolish the Muslim and Arab cultural heritage, and keep quiet about attacks on the shrines of the Shia sect in Iraq, carried out by Saudi-incited Sunni terrorists.

In the realm of cultural vandalism, Saudi Arabia has much to account for. For even the 2001 destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban in Afghanistan was inspired by the doctrines and habits of Wahhabism, which remains the state-imposed interpretation of Islam in the Saudi kingdom. Yet Wahhabi depredations to the cultural legacy of Arabia have been more extensive, more thoroughly planned, and more persistent than any other such efforts in the last two centuries, except for those seen under Russian communism. And in a coincidence that may not be a coincidence at all, much of the wrecking of historic buildings in Saudi Arabia has been carried out by none other than the Saudi Bin Laden Group, the engineering and construction firm that is the source of Osama bin Laden's wealth.

Indeed, it is more than a startling piece of local news in the Arabian peninsula when ancient mosques, houses, and cemeteries, and even natural features of the landscape associated with early Islamic history, are destroyed in Mecca and Medina. Such incidents embody the battle for the soul of Islam.

Case in point: Some Wahhabis are currently demanding the removal of a cave at Medina, where Muhammad rested during a famous battle, because it draws crowds of Muslims to pray at the site. Wahhabis, as extreme simplifiers and iconoclasts in matters of religion, condemn prayer with the soul of the Prophet as an intercessor, as well as prayer at locations associated with Muhammad. And while less fanatical members of the sect suggest that fencing off the cave will deter prayer there, Sheikh Abd al-Aziz bin Saleh Al-Jarbu, of the Islamic University of Medina (a Wahhabi center), has argued that destroying the site is the only solution. He insists that a fence is insufficient, since people will climb over it.

"The only solution in my mind is to destroy it," he says. "Destroying it will solve the problem for good."

Why do Wahhabis object to Muslims gathering for prayer at a sacred site? The three monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, Islam—have all undergone violent conflicts and the devastation of cultural heritage over allegations of idol-worship. In the first two cases, however, such tragic chapters are long in the past; they ended for Christians in the last three centuries. Unfortunately, Islam remains convulsed by such controversy. Wahhabis preach that prayer at, and preservation of, historic mosques, and the tombs of holy men and women, as well as protection of graveyards of the pious and other monuments, and the decoration of new mosques, and establishment of new cemeteries, are all acts of idolatry.

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Of course, most Wahhabis do not object to the construction of opulent palaces and mausoleums for Saudi rulers, but consistency is not their strong suit. In Wahhabi practice, anywhere in the Muslim world, to treat a building or a grave as something worth protecting, and to encourage Muslims to pray at such sites, makes the structure or memorial stone an idol and the worshipper an unbeliever. The Wahhabis especially hate prayers and recitations in praise of Muhammad, which are a firmly established feature of traditional Islam, but which the Wahhabis consider an abominable imitation of Christian practice.

Such details of Wahhabi ideology might be no more than examples of one excessive interpretation of Islam, incomprehensible to the non-Wahhabi mind, were it not that the ongoing campaign of historical demolition in Saudi Arabia has become an important issue in the Saudi transition from an absolutist, ideological regime. "Saudology," or the interpretation of political and theological developments in the kingdom, resembles its predecessor, Kremlinology, in that major events may be discerned behind apparently trivial details.

King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz has long been known for his anti-Wahhabi views, and slow but perceptible changes could lead to the separation of Wahhabism from the state, and the transformation of the kingdom into a constitutional monarchy. Among the indicators are a renewal among Saudi subjects of the spiritual traditions of Sufism, which Wahhabis despise and have worked hard to liquidate, but to which Abdullah's predecessor, the late King Fahd, was devoted. Other promising news includes the relaxation of restrictions on reading once-banned books, and the naming of women to significant business posts.

Recently, rumors have swept the kingdom of an imminent power struggle between King Abdullah and his younger half-brother, Prince Nayef, minister of the interior and a fierce Wahhabi. King Abdullah has reportedly called for disbanding the religious militia, or *mutawwa*, which patrol the streets of the kingdom, harassing and even brutalizing those they claim have violated rules for modesty between men and women. (Nayef, it is said, has rejected the proposal to disband the paramilitary arm, and there are even claims that Nayef, like the Soviet holdouts in Russia in 1991, is preparing a coup to obstruct any tendency toward further reform.)

Heritage Research Foundation

Skyscrapers over Mecca, Saudi Arabia

In the last decades of the Soviet era, the struggle for the freedom of artistic creation was a major feature in the epic of liberation. Regimes throughout the Soviet bloc responded to innovations in art and literature by imprisoning artists and authors, trashing art shows, confiscating manuscripts, and censoring books. Under Saudi rule, social change is expressed in cultural turmoil, but takes a different form. Faced with the very real possibility of losing their power and funding as state clerics, the Wahhabis, who still control large areas of the Saudi state, are fighting back—and the extremists have responded to pressure by an increased, even frenzied, effort to liquidate the original religious and architectural legacy of the kingdom.

In the cultural realm, this could be Wahhabism's last stand—just as the persecution of dissident writers marked the death agony of Russian communism. The difference is that the Communists feared the works of living people; the Saudi-Wahhabis are terrified at the survival of the Islamic past.

This has resulted in, among other things, construction projects that have undermined the Grand Mosque here in Mecca, leaving it unstable. In August 2002, the minaret at the Medina mosque-tomb of Ali al-Uraidh, a son of Jaafar al-Sadiq (702-765), was dynamited. (Jaafar al-Sadiq is considered the sixth imam, or religious guide, for the majority of Shia Muslims, and was the founder of Shia jurisprudence.) The razing of the vast graveyard of Jannat al-Baqi in Medina, where many of Muhammad's companions were buried, is well documented. The location was first assaulted by the Wahhabis in the 19th century, and again with the Saudi takeover of Mecca and Medina in 1924.

In 2002 the Ottoman-era Ajyad fortress, overlooking the Grand Mosque in Mecca, was demolished. The fortress was knocked down to make way for an apartment complex, called the Zam Zam Towers. The Saudi Islamic Affairs minister, Saleh Al-

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Sheikh, had promised that the fortress would be rebuilt in its original form. (The plot of land earmarked for the Towers was formerly under the control of pious endowments, a form of Islamic charitable institution. Some had been established by King Ibn Saud for the maintenance of the Mecca mosques.) But the sanctity of mosques proved little resistant to the sanctity of profits for the Bin Laden Group and its Wahhabi accomplices. Even more bizarre, the Zam Zam Towers are named for the famous well of Zam Zam, for which Mecca is known throughout the Muslim world. But the sources of the well have been diverted by Saudi Bin Laden builders, so that the well of Zam Zam may soon disappear altogether.

The grave of Muhammad's mother, Amina bint Wahb, has been bulldozed and soaked with gasoline. The house of Abu Bakr Siddiq, the closest companion of Muhammad—and the first of the "four rightly-guided caliphs," or immediate successors as leader of the Muslims—has been replaced by the Mecca Hilton Hotel. In Medina, of seven famous mosques erected near the site of the Battle of the Trench, in which Muhammad participated, five have been destroyed. An automatic teller machine now sits in the area. The two remaining mosques are also due for obliteration.

One of the most remarkable and, for Westerners and non-Wahhabi Muslims, shocking examples of the Saudi passion for destruction involves the house of Khadija, the wife of Muhammad, in which the couple lived while here in Mecca. The residence of Khadija was discovered in 1989 during excavations near the Grand Mosque, carried out in preparation for installation of a large paved area.

During the uncontrolled leveling of old buildings in the neighborhood (an objectionable practice in itself) a structure identified as the house of Khadija and Muhammad was located by Saudi Bin Laden personnel, hidden under a foundation. The house included a prayer room used by Muhammad, and was the location where five of his children were born. After the building was photographed, its presence was concealed by sand. Public toilets were erected on the spot where Muhammad had slept. The aim was, once again, to discourage prayer at the site, since Muslims, like Jews, cannot pray in a place where there is any odor of human waste.

Equally startling is a plan for "rebuilding" the birthplace of Muhammad in Mecca. Decades ago the Wahhabis turned the location into a cattle market, and then replaced it with a library. But with a new proposal for a huge real estate development, to be erected in cooperation with the London-based Le Meridien luxury hotel chain, the library is scheduled to disappear. In its place a multistory residential complex will overshadow the Grand Mosque of Mecca.

Prince Turki al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Washington, has provided perfunctory pledges that the kingdom would not abandon its historical patrimony. But the Saudis have shown little interest in protecting the cultural past, and the destruction of history, and historic artifacts, is yet another way for the Wahhabis to show that there is no other form of Islam—whether on the ground, in archives, or in the popular memory—than their own.

We may be witnessing the end of the historic legacy of Mecca and Medina. Today, fewer than 20 structures in Mecca date to the time of Muhammad. Mai Yamani, an outstanding Saudi dissident author and defender of the cultural identity and legacy of Hejaz, the region that includes Mecca and Medina, has noted that the uproar over the Danish cartoons drove "thousands of people into the streets to protest," but when sites are threatened "related to the Prophet . . . part of their heritage and religion . . . we see no concern from Muslims."

Says Yamani: The Saudi monarchy must "rein in" the Wahhabis—now. For their heedlessness may yet provoke enough disgust among Muslims, inside and outside the kingdom, to bring about a break with the Wahhabi monopoly over religious life in the birthplace of Islam—and, perhaps, faster movement toward a system of popular sovereignty. ♦

Cops and Robbers

Good guys, bad guys, and mixtures of both.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

It's one of the surefire plotlines of the past 30 years: A police officer goes undercover, only to find that he's no longer simply pretending to be a criminal but is being drawn into criminality as a way of life. Dozens of movies and TV shows have been built around it, some of them exceptional (*Donnie Brasco* in particular). But director Martin Scorsese and screenwriter William Monahan have outdone them all in *The Departed*.

The Departed
Directed by Martin Scorsese

The plot is borrowed from a Hong Kong gangster flick called *Infernal Affairs*. An undercover cop is sent to get the goods on a Boston mob boss. The clever mob boss has his own undercover agent inside the investigation. The question becomes: Who's going to be exposed first? Leonardo DiCaprio is the undercover cop, Matt Damon the undercover gangster, and Jack Nicholson the mob boss, and they're all sensationally good.

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So is the picture. *The Departed* has all the signature features of a Scorsese crime film. There's the shocking violence of *Goodfellas* and *Casino*, the wildly profane dialogue of *Mean Streets*, the hyperbolic camera work of *Cape Fear*, and the refusal to glamorize or romanticize the conduct of law-breaking psychopaths that is the moral hallmark of all Scorsese's work.

But *The Departed* has something else as well, an essential quality Scorsese's movies often lack: It's great fun. Watching Nicholson chomp on the scenery as Boston's most notorious crime boss is a kick. Watching DiCaprio out-argue a self-satisfied court-assigned psychiatrist is exhilarating. Watching Damon slither out of exposure time and time again is a gas, even though you want him to get caught. Watching Mark Wahlberg (in a truly remarkable performance) as the most cynical and abrasive police detective who has ever lived is among the most distinctive moviegoing pleasures of recent years. And watching that felonious scene-stealer Alec Baldwin do more with five words of dialogue than most actors can with a Shakespeare soliloquy is a wondrous spectacle in itself.

Aside from the acting, the real glory of *The Departed* isn't Scorsese's characteristically ostentatious directing style, but William Monahan's ripe and original screenplay. Even though the movie seems to be begging for one of those clichéd scenes in which the crook says to the cop, "We're a lot alike, you and me," Monahan doesn't succumb to the lure of that cheap parallel. Matt Damon's character, Colin Sullivan, is an Irish kid from South Boston who falls under the sway of Nicholson's Fagin-like Frank Costello. But it turns out DiCaprio's Billy Costigan is merely a Southie wannabe who grew up in a tony suburb and scored 1400 on his SATs. He's hungry for downscale authenticity because his father was a neighborhood boy who married up, lived to regret it, and spent his life toting baggage at Logan Airport and refusing to kowtow to his wife's family, Costello, or anyone else.

We never see Costigan's father. He's only painted for us in a few word pictures, some by Wahlberg's peerlessly nasty Detective Dignam, and some by an admiring Costello. But the time the movie takes to flesh out Billy Costigan's background, character, and motivation gives it weight and heft, and makes Costigan's trials and extreme sacrifices seem very real. The characters here act and react in unexpected and unanticipated ways. They are all intelligent, quick-witted, and capable of insight.

Everett Collection, Inc.

Jack Nicholson, Matt Damon

That's Monahan's work, as is the often-stunning dialogue. Just a few samples: Explaining why a decent student and choirboy became a gangster, Costello says at the movie's outset, "I don't want to be a product of my environment. I want my environment to be a product of me." Later, Costello asks a guy at a bar how his mother is feeling. "She's on her way out." To which Costello responds, "We all are. Act accordingly."

But the scenes in which *The Departed* really takes us places we've never been before are the ones inside the police investigation into Frank Costello. Dignam knows who the undercover agent is, but won't tell anyone else because he's trying to protect Costigan. Sullivan picks fights with Dignam in order to force Dignam to reveal the name, so that Sullivan can call his "dad" (Costello) and get Costigan killed. Sullivan's goading then causes the other members of the joint task force, including the FBI, to start arguing among themselves. They joke and bicker and get nothing done. A sting at a warehouse to be monitored on hidden cameras goes awry when the crack technician leaves acres of dead spots where nothing can be seen.

The investigation we see goes on for a year. Evidently it has gone on for several years before the movie begins. Does Costello, who is nearing 70, possess mythic gifts for eluding capture? Or is Costello himself being protected?

There's so much going on that it gets kind of messy. Plot lines are floated that go unresolved, perhaps because the final cut runs almost two-and-a-half hours and something had to give. The movie had a very troubled shoot in Boston and may have been revised and rethought on the fly before spending a full year in the editing room. That's usually a sign of disaster—as it was in the case of the catastrophic new version of *All the King's Men*, which, like many catastrophes, was produced in part by James Carville. But what's on screen is so juicy that *The Departed* may be the rare movie worth seeing in a theater and then on DVD, cueing up all the deleted scenes. ♦

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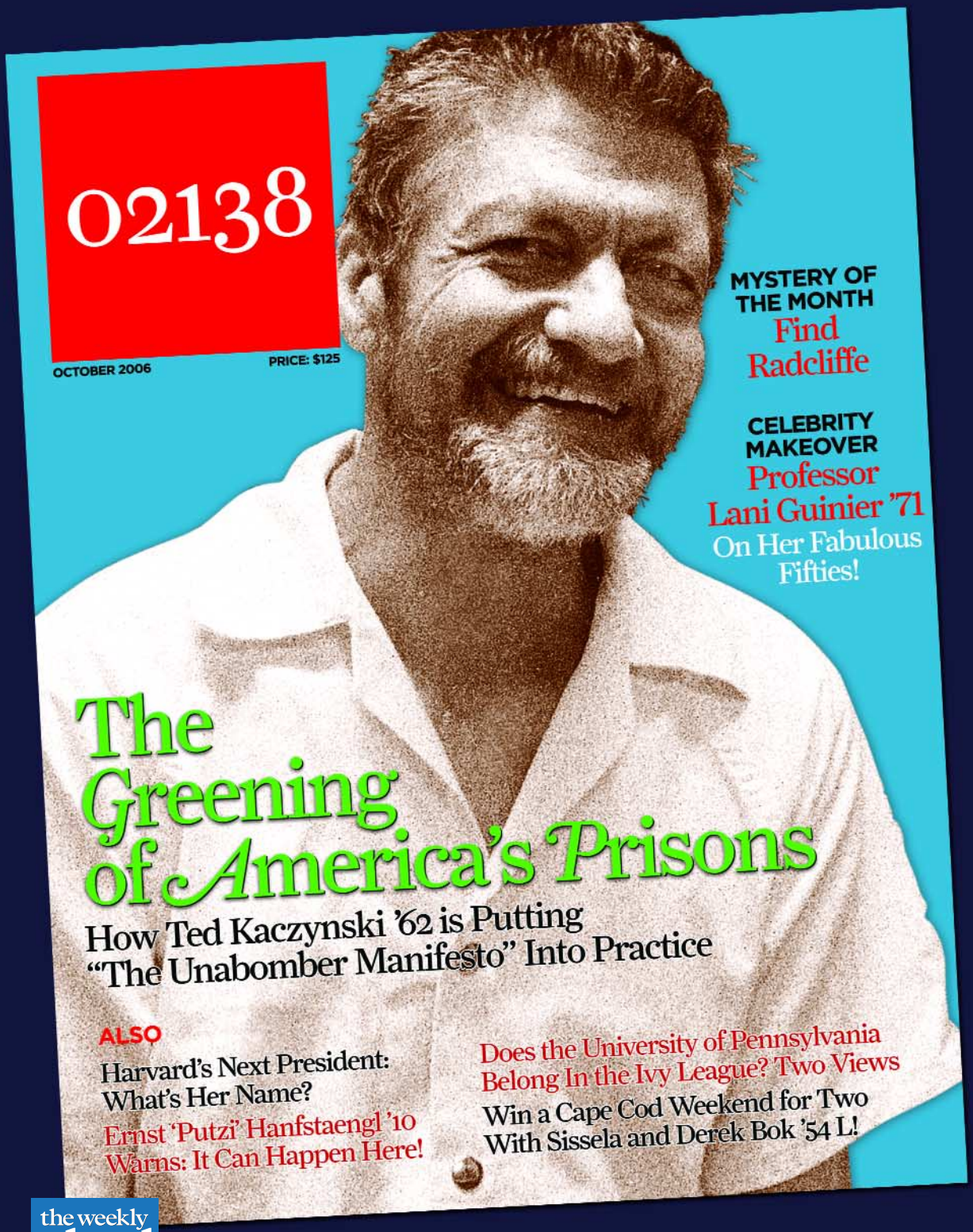
Parody

And now they have their own magazine. It's called 02138—a meaningless number to the rest of us but full of resonance for them: It's the Zip code of the school that trained them to rule—Harvard University. **—Washington Post, *September 26***



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